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WHERE SHALL HE FIND HER?

FROM THE FRENCH.

TRANSLATED

BY

I. D. A.

Charles Reybaud

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WHERE SHALL HE FIND HER?

CHAPTER I.

During my college life, some thirty years ago, I was in the habit of spending part of my vacation with an uncle on my mother's side, who lived in a pretty house at Upper Provence, some leagues from the frontier of Piedmont. This uncle was an old monk, petrified with science, and it was rumored that he would have been one of the glories of the savant congregation of St. Maur, had not the Revolution driven him from his convent ere he had completed his novitiate.

Dom Gérusac, as he was still called in the family, was but twenty-five years of age when the promulgation of a decree broke his religious

vows. He did not, however, profit by the benefit of this law to enter into things temporal, nor did he return to his monastic life; neither did he, like the greater part of the members of his order, renew, in some convent of Italy or Spain, the garb of St. Benoit; but when the revolutionary storm somewhat abated its fury, he gathered the remains of his paternal inheritance, and took refuge in a sequestered nook, which he named St. Pierre de Corbie, in memory of the celebrated house where he had passed his first student years. This little domain was half hidden in a recess of the Alps, on the southerly slope of that chain of mountains, which gradually descends to the mouth of the Var. It was a site both wild and charming.

The house, built on a slight elevation, was overtopped by immense rocky cones, on the declivity of which grew interlaced clumps of oak, and a profusion of flowering shrubs. One arrived there by a winding path, bordered by Italian willows, and tall poplar trees, which formed on either side a curtain of foliage, through which

might be seen fields, olive orchards, and vineyards, which resembled long green ribbons of divers shades unrolled upon the chalky parterre.

As usual, the diligence left me a good mile from St. Pierre, and I took a cross-road where never coachman nor wagoner had ventured to drive. With a light heart I advanced on this seldom frequented road, charmed to proceed thus alone; my luggage tied in a handkerchief, and my walking-stick in my hand, as if I were about to make the tour of France. On approaching the house I quickened my pace, and when at last I entered the lane I paused a moment to look on every side with inexpressible joy at recognizing each ledge of rocks, and each little rivulet lost in the turf. All was unchanged, still the same peaceful, charming picture. Just beyond, there stood the house with its white front and red roof, from which arose and curled a long line of smoke; below, the garden still green and flowering as in the spring-time; around it the orchard with its apple-trees, all

red, and its plum-trees, all purple, and bent beneath the weight of ripe fruits; added to this arose the beautiful oak-clad mountains and rich pastures, from which the bleating of flocks was heard.

My good old uncle came to meet me with open arms, informing himself above all if I had come loaded with university laurels, and not failing to compliment me in Latin when I had announced my success. Then, remarking that I seemed tired and thirsty, he ushered me into the little front parlor; calling his old servant Marian that she might prepare me a glass of wine *sucrée*, and relieve me of my luggage.

The impression which the sight of this servant produced on me disagreeably counteracted the delight I had felt on finding myself in this retreat. She was perhaps the ugliest creature I had ever beheld; her countenance had a crabbed and sadly wrinkled appearance, which created in me an invincible feeling of aversion. When I was a lad, eight or ten years of age, I dared not look in her face, and later in life I never saw her

without being reminded of the personages in the legend of the infernal regions. She seemed to me like a vampire or ghoul, with her long rigid body, her bony hands, and crooked eyes, and the innumerable wrinkles which furrowed her forehead. Otherwise she was an ordinary servant, such as one may see almost everywhere; active, precise, submissive, and silent almost to taciturnity.

The interior of his house my uncle had arranged with that *récherché* simplicity and commodious luxury peculiar to ancient religious houses. All around him, and everything, with the exception of old Marian, had a cheerful and agreeable aspect. The furniture of the room, which he most frequently occupied, was of a modest elegance, the refinements of which one discovered little by little. Everything was calculated for a life peaceful, studious, and contemplative. Fauteuils, soft and deep, glided quietly on their rollers, and almost placed themselves around the fireplace, wherein from the month of September a small bright fire was invariably lighted; Japan vases filled with flowers sur-

mounted the corner-stands, while four large representations on canvas, of historical subjects, framed with gray painted wood, hung on the walls. One large door was constantly left open, and showed a second apartment in which the wainscoting was tapestried entirely with bibliographical pictures, treasures amassed by my uncle. There also figured in fine order the battles of Latin authors, the learned body of the monks of St. Maur, and a host of less illustrious writers, who applied themselves to the study of our national chronicles. Some modern poets seemed to have lost themselves amid these large folios, and their elegant bindings shone here and there on the dusty shelves. Some very curious old stamps, which my uncle prized very highly, and of which he had a large collection, ornamented the dining-room, which preceded the little saloon. On the modest sideboard of nut-wood stood several pieces of old silver of rare and exquisite workmanship, but all the rarities took much less of my attention than did a very mediocre painting which Dom Géru-

sac had thought proper to place above the mantel-mirror. It was a pastel, rather faded by time, whose oval frame was broken and defaced in many places. It represented a woman of the most dazzling beauty, in all the splendor of her youth; her dress was something in the style of a shepherdess of Watteau. A long boddice-waist, ornamented with shells of rose-colored ribbon, sustained her delicate and rounded waist, and in lieu of bracelets, she wore bands of wide black velvet, knotted around her beautiful arms, otherwise left bare to the elbow; her hair was tied with pale blue ribbons in a simple manner, while her face wore a supremely attractive expression; her deep, blue, and slightly drooping eyes were full of intensity and fervor; her lips slightly parted with a vague smile, showing teeth of the purest enamel, resembling a pomegranate blossom, in whose calyx jasmines had fallen.

My chair at table was opposite, and facing the fireplace where I could not raise my eyes without beholding this fascinating creature, who, on her part, seemed to look down at

me, smiling on me with a tender languor, but upon lowering my eyes they invariably encountered the dry, repulsive face of Marian, who, standing behind my uncle's chair, silently changed the plates, and served us water; this contrast produced a peculiar impression upon me, and augmented, if possible, the antipathy which I felt to the old servant. Perhaps I should have become accustomed to her dark ugliness, had I not so constantly before me this ideal, this fresh and radiant beauty. As for my uncle he had for certain things the simplicity of a saint; and at the same time the indifference of a savant. I am confident that he never had looked at Marian's face, for one day I ventured to ask him if he remembered ever having seen her less dried and wrinkled. "Ma foi, no; do you think she is old? why, she must be as old as myself, nearly sixty!" And, as I did not reply, he added, "Perhaps she is even younger; there are persons who are old before their time; during the ten years that she has been in my service her face has always appeared the same to

me, and with this exception she is as strong and active as a young girl."

Dom Gérusac lived altogether retired from the world; he corresponded only with the learned societies to whom he addressed his labors, and only received as visitors a few members of his family who came long distances to see him. One good old priest, named Abbé Lambert, was the only person that one met often on the road to St. Pierre. Once a week during vacation I saw him come, his poor cassock tucked in his pocket, his breviary under his arm, and his cane in his hand. He was the curate of the parish of Malepire, on the confines of which was situated my uncle's little domain, and the poor curate was certainly the poorest curate in France; his flock was scattered over a vast area, covered with woods, divided by deep valleys, and traversed by torrents which were often impassable. The village of Malepire, situated nearly in the heart of the parish, had hardly one hundred inhabitants; but to judge from its surrounding walls, and from the old and tumble-down houses,

the number of its inhabitants must once have been much greater. The church, whose Gothic tower still overlooked the surroundings, was a very good-sized edifice, in which one might discover the traces of a former splendor. Magnificent windows decorated the sanctuary, while mutilated sculpture and broken frames indicated the places once occupied by masterpieces of art. The village of Malepire was situated about a mile distant from St. Pierre, on the other side of a mountain, which it was necessary to climb every Sunday in order to attend mass; for Dom Gérusac did not neglect this duty, though he had long since renounced the practices of a religious life.

By a singular phenomena, common, however, in alpine countries, we enjoyed an equable and mild temperature on the southerly side of the mountain, while on the elevated points frequent storms occurred, and in the rest of the parish extreme cold was felt. Therefore, we invariably took with us extra clothing, before ascending these elevated plateaux. Marian went

ahead, carrying our cloaks, and awaited us at the mouth of a gorge which cut the summit of the mountain, and where a current of frosty air was generally to be felt. The old servant had also a basket on her arm, a heavy bag on her shoulder; these contained our breakfast and my uncle's alms, which she persisted in carrying thus, instead of placing them in the saddlebags on the docile mule which my uncle rode. It was customary with us to halt at the gorge which I have just mentioned, which was called Malepire's Pass. It had a sombre and wild aspect, but was nevertheless to me singularly pleasing. The rock, cut by some convulsion of the antediluvian period, presented on either side walls almost perpendicular, while its double crest, deeply niched, sketched itself in black festoons against the pale blue sky. The bottom of this deep cleft was entirely covered with a multitude of plants and shrubs, whose inextricable interlacings hid still deeper abysses below. The road lay between these rocks, and the mass of verdure from beneath which the rushing of

the rapid waters of a torrent could be heard. Such a road, if it may be so called, was altogether impracticable in winter, when the snow and glaciers covered the irregularities of the locality, but in summer one might walk in safety in the shade upon a carpet of moss and turf, and inhale the fresh breezes and fragrance which rose from the depths of verdure that bordered the pass. An immense mass of rocks barred the entrance to this defile, and advanced like a promontory, forming the northern slope of the mountain. From the summit of this resting-place, where the barren sides sloped almost perpendicularly down to the village, might be seen the fortification-walls and the ruined towers of the Chateau de Malepire. When we arrived at the entrance of the gorge, Marian, who awaited us, seated at the foot of the rocks, came to us to aid Dom Gérusac in dismounting, after which she unfolded our cloaks, and silently put them on our shoulders, and went on her way, leading the mule by the bridle.

"Verily, that girl has the legs of an ostrich,

who goes, they say, at the rate of seven miles an hour," cried my good uncle, following her with his eyes ; "see, she is already out of sight." "So much the better," said I, mentally; for Marian's face spoiled the face of the country for me. My imagination revolted at the sight of this shepherdess of the Alps in Sunday toilette, with her great shoes, her frightful black straw hat raised on her old wig, and her dishabille of muslin, the sleeves of which exposed her long, bony arms. When she had disappeared I gave a sigh of relief, and followed the road contented; my imagination became awakened in the midst of the agreeable solitude, and I contemplated with a vague enthusiasm the tableau which offered itself to my gaze as I reached the extremity of the gorge. I was opposite the rock on the summit of which rose the lordly chateau, while at the foot of this gigantic block I perceived the little church, and the village with its houses irregularly grouped around it ; before it was a large square shaded by two elms whose trunks were so closely joined as to form but one tree, the largest

and finest to be seen in the whole surrounding country. Just beyond the hamlet opened a wide perspective where the eye could seize upon no one object; one might have thought in contemplating it that in some convulsion of nature these overthrown masses had, in moving, been suddenly solidified, and thus formed the immovable waves of an ocean of mountains. The ruins which surrounded this severe landscape presented an imposing scene in which one might again find the architecture of several different epochs. Dom Gérusac had not failed, in passing, to explain to me the character of these ruins. According to his account the principal tower had witnessed the encampment on this plain of the Roman legions; the outer wall, which surrounded the whole, dated from feudal times, whilst the façade had on either side two pavilions of altogether modern date; however, all these constructions, without either roofs or doors, had an air of magnificent dilapidation. Sometimes I questioned my uncle of the ancient lords of Malepire, but the worthy man had not concerned himself with local

tradition, and he invariably answered, shaking his head:

"It is for futurity to unravel the history of these great families still; the chronicles are to be had. There are some very valuable and precious in the charter of the church of Saint Maur, which are in my possession; lately I happened to cast my eyes on a title which furnishes incontestable proof that Ferraud, seventh baron of Malepire, was one of the sixteen provincial lords who travelled to the Holy Land with Godefroy de Bouillion, and some day I shall undertake an essay on the subject; and I promise you it will be read."

Whilst awaiting the history of this Ferraud la Croix, I tried to make Marian relate me the more recent history of the country. One day, as we were going up to Malepire, I joined her at the entrance of the gorge, and, instead of avoiding her as usual, I resolutely commenced a conversation.

"This is a beautiful morning," said I, approaching her; "I feel as light as a deer, and

have walked so fast without perceiving it that I have left my uncle far behind. Permit me to seat myself beside you, my dear Marian, while we await him. Do you not begin to find this road a little long and difficult for your poor limbs?"

"No, sir," replied she, in that brief and querulous tone peculiar to old women of a sour temper.

But I was not to be discouraged, and continued:

"Before the Revolution that must have been a fine chateau above there," looking at the ruins. "Did you see it at that time, Marian, when it was inhabited by its ancient lords?" As she made no reply whatever, I politely added: "You must have been very young at that time."

"So young that I recollect nothing at all of it," exclaimed she, in a lofty tone; and, picking up the wallet and basket, she went to meet my uncle.

This response seemed a strange coquetry from the mouth of Marian. Evidently, she had at least attained the age of discretion when the ancient *régime* finished. I questioned, also, the

Abbé Lambert, but not more satisfactorily. This worthy man had served the curacy only since the restoration of the Church; nor were the peasants more *au fait* as to local tradition. They cared very little what had happened hitherto; and the young generation knew not whether thirty years or thirty centuries had passed since the demolition of the Chateau de Malepire. One day, however, when I stopped under the shade at the door of the church, a little peasant said to me, whilst pointing up to the tree, with an air of wisdom:

"Don't you think, sir, that these are two beautiful trees, quite straight and full of leaves? There are at least fifty magpies' nests in the highest branches. I don't believe there are any trees like them in all Provence."

"They do not appear to be very old," said I, observing the vigorous branches, whose foliage formed an impenetrable dome of verdure.

"Well, who knows," replied the little peasant, "who knows how many years they have been planted and baptized?"

"Baptized!" cried I.

"Yes, sir; this one is called M. le Marquis, and that M. le Baron."

"And why is that, my boy?"

"Why!" exclaimed the boy. "Ah! that I cannot tell you," said he, shrugging his shoulders. "Upon my word I never heard. It happened so long ago that no one knows anything about it."

CHAPTER II.

I HAVE said that there was, in my uncle's dining-room, a pastel which singularly captivated my attention; this picture figured above an antique mirror, where one saw one's self reflected frightfully green; there were on the mantel, besides two little Sèvres cups embellished with designs and garlands in miniature, two bijoux, which Marian filled with allumettes. I do not know why I imagined that the mirror, the pastel, and the cups had always been together in the same manner as I now saw them; that the original of the portrait had beheld herself in the greenish mirror, and that her pure lips had more than once touched the border of the porcelain cups. This idea being formed in my mind, I was tormented with a vehement curiosity, and formed a host of conjectures which were very romantic. Little by little a strange, unaccountable senti-

ment was born of this preoccupation ; from looking at this portrait, whose intense regard seemed fixed on me, I became desperately in love with it. I felt, on gazing at it, the same transports which the presence of a living mistress would have occasioned. All the articles which decorated the chimney-piece had become for me mysterious and sacred relics. In the ingenuity of my love, I rendered them a sort of worship. I had emptied them of Marian's allumettes, and every day put in their stead the most beautiful flowers that I could find in the garden. Whilst Dom Gérusac thought me absorbed in his folios I dreamt leaning on my elbows, and the intensity of my passion went so far as to make a poet of me. I improvised for this beauty, who no longer existed but in painting. When this folly took possession of me I was but seventeen, and had just finished my rhetoric. In the midst of this internal trouble I gained sufficient control over myself to conceal the continual emotions of the bizarre and extravagant love to which I was a prey. The mere idea that it should be sus-

pected caused in me a mental shame. My curiosity had become an insupportable torment of mind. I formed chimerical suppositions and sought without ceasing the origin and name of this fatal beauty, whose portrait had perhaps been painted an hundred years ago. Nothing would have been more simple than to enlighten myself. I had but to question my uncle; but I was so troubled at the bare idea of this explication, that I trembled to approach the subject, lest I should, by some involuntary sign, betray what was passing in my heart. . . . One day, however, while we were at table, I took courage, and cried, whilst feigning laughter, "I say, my dear uncle, you have there a mirror which gives one a face the color of green sealing-wax."

"It is a pretty piece of furniture, nevertheless," replied Dom Gérusac: "the frame is of ebony, encrusted with silver and mother-of-pearl; unfortunately the top has been broken. I suppose it was the armorial with support and crest. I found that at D——, in the shop of an old

Jew; the pastel and the cups also pell-mell with old rubbish."

My heart throbbed; I resumed, in a stifled voice, "These articles probably came from some noble house pillaged during the Revolution."

"Very probably," replied my uncle. "But I see no clue by which I can recognize the possessors of the old-fashioned things, as you young people call all that is not of modern date."

Dom Gérusac had turned round to inspect the upper part of the chimney-piece; and he added, whilst pointing to the portrait, "Do you not think, Frederic, that this frame is also charming?"

"The portrait? oh, yes!" cried I.

"Why, no," replied Dom Gérusac: "that is faded, and of a detestable design; but the frame is a veritable *chef-d'œuvre.* Some day I will have it restored; and the portrait I will give to Marian, that she may hang it in her chamber beside the Wandering Jew."

These words made me shudder; I became

quite pale, but dared not ask of my uncle the object of my secret adoration. I resigned myself to the idea of seeing it pass into Marian's hands, thinking that it would not be impossible to buy it of her.

Meanwhile my uncle received a letter which filled him with joy, and upset his household, usually so regular and tranquil. A great person, the Marquis of Champaubert, ambassador to a foreign court, announced to Dom Gérusac that, as he intended passing by Toulon, he should go out of his way for the purpose of paying him a visit, and renewing their former friendship. My uncle immediately assembled his privy council, that is to say, he called Marian, and told her the contents of the letter which he had just received.

"Set every one to work," said he, "tell Babelou to prepare the blue chamber, and do you attend to the culinary department. M. de Champaubert will be here to-morrow; let everything be in readiness early, but especially let every attention be paid to the dinner. There are dishes in

which you excel, pigeon-pâté, for instance—try to serve us one; give us also eggs *à la neige*, a roast capon; in fine, anything better that you can think of." "I will do my best," replied Marian briefly; and, without waiting further orders, she returned to her kitchen.

"This good Maximian, how happy I shall be to see him again!" said Dom Gérusac to me; "he is my oldest friend; we commenced our studies together among the orators. But I was destined for St. Maur; and, two years after, I went to La Chaise Dieu. Champaubert obtained permission to come here with me; but a religious life was not very attractive to him. He was a good scholar and applied himself to the study of the dead languages. His family wished him to enter the church; but the death of his elder brother having made him the only son, he re-entered the world before having left. I was about commencing my novitiate when he left it. It was for the feast of All Saints. It seems to me that I can see him now in his blue coat and his hat à l'Américaine, ready to mount his horse and waving us

his adieux. How graceful he was! what an elegant cavalier!"

"Was it long ago?" asked I, indifferently.

"Let me see," musingly replied my uncle, "it was in '87. The second Easter feast. It was, consequently, thirty-five years ago. Since that time I have not seen Champaubert, nor have I until now received any news of him except through the public papers. At the commencement of the Revolution he emigrated, nor did he return until after peace was restored. When his talents and fidelity had their reward, the King overwhelmed him with gifts and honors. He is a peer and ambassador of France; he has innumerable titles and dignities: may God keep him in this good fortune; he is worthy of it."

The idea of seeing, near by, so important a personage, and being presented to him, kept me awake all night; and, as soon as it was morning, I took up my post of observation on the terrace, much puzzled to know how his excellency's carriage could possibly pass over the innumerable ruts and quagmires with which the intervening

road abounded. The reception which was preparing for him caused me no little anxiety. It appeared to me altogether unworthy so distinguished a guest, and I figured to myself the appearance our old servant would make in the midst of the numerous train which I supposed would attend the Marquis. I thought how intrepidly she would march into the dining-room with her napkin over her arm, and that her long, bony hand would serve water to our illustrious guest.

In the afternoon, Babelou, the little girl who assisted in the kitchen, appeared at the entrance to the terrace, and called out to me, in a most unmusical voice, "Come Mr. Frederic; the gentleman has come; he is in the lane."

"And his carriage, which way has that gone?" said I, extremely astonished: "it may have been upset in some ravine."

"His carriage!" exclaimed Babelou with a loud burst of laughter: "why it is like your uncle's, and can pass easily over any road where a donkey can put his four feet!" In short the ambassador arrived in a little country cart which very

much resembled a wheelbarrow, with all his suit reduced to a single peasant who carried his valise, and at the same time drove the donkey with the twig of a tree. The marquis alighted nimbly, and threw himself on my uncle's neck, who wept with joy. The worthy man said, as he pressed his hand, "Ah! I did not expect such a visit; what happiness for me, my lord!"

"Why call me my lord," interrupted the Marquis, tucking him under his arm, "call me Maximian as of old; do you know, my dear Thomas, I recognized you immediately?"

"The case with myself," replied my uncle, "really you have changed but little."

"Eh, eh! nevertheless, many snows have fallen since we parted," sighed the Marquis, passing his hand through his grayish hair.

"Had your letter reached me one day sooner I should have gone to C—— to meet you," replied my uncle; "you must have had no little difficulty in getting here."

"Not the slightest," replied his excellency: "I merely dismissed my carriage, and obtained, at

the nearest hamlet, a donkey-cart, and a peasant to conduct me here."

"But who told you the direct road?" again asked my uncle.

"No one; I already knew the country," replied M. de Champaubert, glancing at the valley and the mountains; "I have been this way before."

"After you left La Chaise Dieu?"

"Nearly two years after."

"Ah!" cried Dom Gérusac, "how happens it that I knew nothing of it?"

The Marquis smiled a melancholy smile, and answered in a lower voice, "You were then at St. Corbie about to take your vows; there were events of which I could not write you."

"Is it possible?" murmured my uncle frankly.

I stood aside surprised and confounded, unable to persuade myself that I had before me a representative of the King of France, and who had often conversed with crowned heads. At the first glance one might have taken him for a country gentleman: his blue coat was crossed over his chest, and prevented the least end of ribbon

whatever from being seen; his whole toilet was perfect simplicity; his manners were easy and natural, his face expressive of amiability, mingled with ingenuity. At the same time he had, perhaps without being aware of it, a certain commanding air in the movement of his head, and occasionally a haughtiness, a singular assurance, shone in his glance; his figure was fine; and, strange to say, he appeared very much younger than my uncle, whose life had been passed in the tranquil labors of science, and had the attraits of an old man, whilst the man of the world, who had suffered the rude shock of his passions and followed a checkered career, still walked with a firm and elastic step.

Dom Gérusac called and presented me: it was but the affair of a moment; then the two friends, arm-in-arm, entered the house. The Marquis inclined toward the garden; but my uncle said, drawing him back, "It is too warm out there: let us rather go to my library."

"With all my heart," replied he, gayly. "There is your world, your society, your family; you will

introduce me to the illustrious company of authors, ancient and modern, but first, I pray you, give me something to drink, as I am very thirsty."

"Marian!" cried my uncle, going towards the kitchen door.

I thought she was going to make her appearance, and awaited the comic effect which she should produce on the Marquis. Fortunately she did not appear, but Babelou came, laden with an immense salver, on which there was a bottle of old wine, some sugar, a basket of magnificent fruit, and a plate of little, downy, yellow peaches.

"This is perfect," said De Champaubert, himself aiding Babelou to place the salver on the table already encumbered with manuscripts and large volumes. "This little girl has divined that I like these yellow peaches of the country, a tart little fruit which has not its equal in the whole country, I can tell you."

"I believe you," replied my uncle, smiling. "It is long since this wild fruit has been found anywhere save in our poor mountains."

"Draw near, my old comrade," replied the Marquis, motioning Dom Gérusac to a seat beside himself: "we have many things to tell each other."

My uncle seated himself, and after asking his orders in a low tone, I retired discreetly, closing the door behind me.

A little before the dinner-hour, Babelou came to seek me in the dining-room. "Good gracious, Mr. Frederic! what shall we do?" said she wildly: "Marian has taken so much trouble since yesterday, that now she is sick, and is going to bed."

I confess that this news was, to me, rather satisfactory than otherwise.

"Well, you will do in her stead," was my reply to the little girl. "Run and put on your best dress with a white apron, and tell Marian to stay quietly in her bed. I will go and tell my uncle."

The two friends had left the library, and passed into the garden, and my uncle was walking, proudly showing his flowers and vegetables to the Marquis. The latter seemed to be charmed

with all he saw, and, with characteristic good-nature, went in raptures over a carnation pink or before a colossal cabbage, and plucked the grapes from the vine in regular schoolboy fashion. I announced to my uncle the vexatious incident which had so unexpectedly occurred in the house. The excellent man, wishing to go immediately and see how Marian was, I remained alone with the Marquis, who having again made the tour of the garden, said familiarly to me :

" My young friend, I think it would be as well for us to go and see if dinner is served."

The dining-room had a long window which opened on the garden. I went ahead and opened the casement, and stood aside to let the Marquis pass ; the curtains were drawn, and a bright sunlight illuminated every corner of the apartment, and the gilding of the old frames shone resplendently in the rays of the setting sun. The Marquis entered, took several steps, and looked about him, and stopped suddenly before the mantel-piece, his eyes fixed on the pastel ; then he turned suddenly to me and said :

"Do you know where that portrait came from?"

I blushed to my very ears, and stammered:

"Ye—yes, my lord: my uncle bought it of an old Jew in D——."

"With the mirror and these little cups?" replied the Marquis.

"I think so, my lord."

At this moment Dom Gérusac entered.

"My dear Maximian," said he, "excuse me, I am afraid we shall not be very well attended at table, as the greater part of my household are absent; in other words, my old servant has fallen ill."

"Well, we will wait on ourselves," replied De Champaubert, placing himself at the table; "such a thing has happened me more than once during the emigration."

Happily Marian had been able to remain in the kitchen all day and direct her little aide-de-camp, Babelou. The table was set perfectly, and the dinner excellent; furthermore, I had disinterred two or three bottles of old wine from the cellar,

which were worthy to figure at a king's table. The Marquis ate abstemiously and quickly, sustaining the conversation, whilst my uncle dined in his usual calm way and solid appetite, stimulated by the joy he felt at having opposite him such a guest. I myself ate nothing. The questions which the marquis had asked convinced me that he recognized that adorable face before which I had been six weeks in ecstasies; that he knew who this woman was, whose name I had despaired ever of hearing; that he could at last tell me the things which of all the world I most desired to know: but how dare I interrogate him in my turn? how even approach such a subject of conversation?

All at once, during dessert, in the interval of a conversation on politics and college reminiscences, my uncle thought proper to say to the Marquis:

"State affairs have so occupied and absorbed your whole existence that you have had no time to think of marriage."

"On the contrary," replied the Marquis, rais-

ing his eyes to the pastel, "I was to have espoused that beautiful person whose portrait you have before you."

"What! what!—this anonymous portrait?" cried Dom Gérusac.

"It is a strange coincidence indeed," continued M. de Champaubert. "I little expected to see again, to-day, the beautiful object of my first love."

"You are going to relate me this story; then we shall be in the humor to recall our *souvenirs* of youth," said my uncle. "I am delighted that you have met that again."

The Marquis smiled bitterly. "To-day," said he, "I can speak tranquilly of it, and since it is your desire I will relate that epoch of my life. I will relate it, not for your edification, my sage friend, but for the instruction of this youth, who contemplates my *fiancée* with an air of agitation, as though those basilisk eyes had already instilled their poison to the very depths of his soul."

At this apostrophe I lost countenance entirely.

It seemed to me that the Marquis was reading the inmost recesses of my heart, and a slight convulsive cough was my only response. My uncle stared at me with his large eyes, and emptied his wineglass at a single draught, and leaned his two hands on the table. This, with him, was a sign of profound attention.

"Have coffee served, and send Babelou away," said the Marquis. "We will remain here. To relate the story, I must sit opposite this portrait."

CHAPTER III.

DAYLIGHT waned. I lighted the candles in the brackets each side of the mantel-mirror, which brought out distinctly every feature of the beautiful pastel which showed itself smilingly through the opaque glass, like a blonde head of Greuze behind the half-open curtain of a window.

The Marquis for a moment contemplated the portrait with a fixed eye; then, as if he divined my violent and secret curiosity, said, addressing himself to me:

"This portrait is that of Marie de Malepire, only daughter of the Baron de Malepire."

"Of the last lord?" cried I; "and she lived in the chateau up there on the mountain?"

"Yes, my young friend, and there passed all the events which I am about to relate to you," replied the Marquis. And after a silence he continued, turning to Dom Gérusac:

"Do you remember, my dear Thomas, a letter in which I announced to you that I was about leaving Paris to travel in the south of France?"

"Yes, certainly, I recollect it perfectly well: it was the last letter you wrote me, and be it said, without reproach, it was dated before the Revolution; if I am not mistaken, it was of the month of August, 1789."

"What an incomparable man you are for chronology!" cried M. de Champaubert. "In short, I arrived in these mountains some time after the famous night of the 4th of August. But first let me explain to you why I undertook this journey, and how the Champauberts of an ancient family in Normandy were in relations with the Malepires of Provence. It is more than a hundred years since the time of the war with Piedmont; Maréchal Tesse's army occupied this frontier; my great-grandfather, Guillaume de Champaubert, served in the regiment of Auvergne with a country gentleman, the Baron de Malepire, who soon became his friend and brother-in-arms. They were both in the flower of their youth, and

each had married a young wife who had followed them to the seat of war, and were both in the Chateau of Malepire, which was an impregnable fortress. There were several combats between the French and the Piedmontese, which devastated the lower countries. The Marquis de Champaubert was wounded in one of these rencontres. The action occurred only two miles distant from this place. His young wife flew to the battle-field, and succeeded in having him transported to the chateau, where he died the next day. A short time after that, the Baron de Malepire was killed under the walls of C——. After this double misfortune, the two ladies remained at Malepire, shut in by the snows which cover these mountains six months of the year, and there brought into the world two sons who were born on the same day, and together were baptized at the village church; in memory of which event two oaks were planted, to which were given the names of 'the new-born children;' when I saw them their shade covered the whole square. Do they still exist?"

"Yes, my lord," replied I, quickly; "and even now they are called the Marquis and Baron, but no one knew why."

"The two widows passed together the year of their mourning," continued M. de Champaubert. "After that they were obliged to separate; but the similarity of their destinies had created in them a friendship which only terminated with their lives, and they brought up their sons with the same sentiments. Although they lived at the two extremities of the kingdom, they took upon themselves, reciprocally, to inform each other of all their domestic events, however trifling, nor did they fail to write each other on every anniversary. The desire for an alliance between the two families existed traditionally with them; but Providence seemed to frown on this project and desire. For three generations there had been no daughters born to the house of Champaubert, and those of the house of Malepire had died in the cradle. I was familar with all this from my infancy; I knew also that the Baron of Malepire at last had a daughter who

was nearly the same age as myself. I was not therefore astonished, two years after, when, on leaving La Chaise Dieu, my father announced to me that he had arranged my marriage with Marie de Malepire. 'My dear child,' said he, 'I believe that this marriage will renew and revive the friendship. I knew the Baron when he went to Paris to espouse M'lle D'Herblay, a most charming person. He is a gentleman of the olden time, a little ignorant and simple-minded, but loyal, full of honor and greatness of soul. The fortune is solid and sufficient; as to the name, there is none better. It is one of the best of the nobility of Provence. I am not informed as to the mind or personal beauty of the demoiselle, but you will see for yourself. I only know that she is not quite twenty.' My father had said all this with a smile, which made me suspect that he was preparing me an agreeable surprise, and that he knew that M'lle de Malepire was an accomplished beauty. You may judge from this portrait that I was correct in my surmise."

"So! she is quite a pretty person," said my uncle, raising his heavy eyebrows with the air of a peasant who forces himself to admire an antique medal, or a manuscript in a dead language.

"I arrived here during the latter part of August, as I said before," continued the Marquis. "For eight days I had rolled in an incommodious post-chaise on the dusty highways; and I can again recall the sensation of joy which I felt at the sight of these green mountains and fresh valleys, where I heard on all sides the murmuring of waters. I left my chaise at C——. The neighboring road did not then exist; there was only a narrow pathway for beasts of burden. I rode on horseback, attended by a mule-driver, who carried my luggage; this man had travelled a little, and spoke good French, though he was but a countryman; he gave me the names of all the hamlets which we saw in the distance, and the history of each locality. When we arrived at the entrance to the gorge, which is called Malepire's Pass, he halted, and showed

me a flat stone which jutted out at the foot of the bridle-path ; perhaps this sort of seat still exists."

"Yes, certainly," said my uncle. "It is there that my old servant, Marian, rests every Sunday on our way to mass."

"I had expected to hear of some brigand adventurer in this gorge," continued M. de Champaubert ; "but the muleteer simply said to me, 'Hold, sir : here is the place where the Baron de Malepire's daughter was resuscitated.'

"'What daughter ?' cried I.

"'She who is still alive and well, sir,' replied he ; 'just listen. She fell ill at the age of seven, and died like the rest of her brothers and sisters, who for a long time had been with the good God. She seemed to be quite dead, and they put her into her coffin, with a crown of white roses on her head, and a cross of white flowers in her little hands ; they then set out to go and bury her below there, in an old chapel where the lords have their sepulchre. When the girls who carried the coffin arrived here, they were so tired that

they placed the bier on this flat stone, in order to rest their weary limbs ; the Curé no longer recited the Libera, each one kept silence, not a sound was to be heard but that of the murmuring of the waters below. Suddenly a little voice came from the bier, the child rose, and looking at the stream said, "I am thirsty!" All the attendants were very much astonished and frightened at seeing her rise from her coffin, but the Curé took her in his arms and carried her safe and well to Madame la Baronne.'

"This recital made me shudder, I knew not what fear already agitated my heart. I had accustomed myself to thoughts of love and marriage, and I trembled when I learned that I had been so near losing my unknown *fiancée*, —irresistible from this moment. The aspect of nature threw me into a transport ; I was intoxicated by the wild perfume of the alpine plants, by the solitude, by the noise, soft and confused, which rose from the depths of the woods, and by the air which I breathed. It was in this state of mind that I arrived at

Malepire. The chateau was at this epoch an old fortress surrounded by formidable walls, flanked by indented towers, to which had been added some modern constructions; a new façade marked the foot of the turret, and on a rock which jutted over a precipice, small green blinds shaded the windows, and the terrace had been transformed into a flower garden, exposed to every breeze; but this embellishment had not changed the primitive character of this ancient feudal castle. The principal entrance was on the north side, and on this side the chateau had retained all the dark and warlike appearance of the edifices of the middle ages. A deep moat encircled the ramparts, and the gate opened between two small turrets still tenanted by falconets. The drawbridge remained as in the time of the war of Provence; but for a number of years this formidable engine of war had not been raised, and now its solid planks formed a passage-way without chains or guards.

"The sun was setting when I arrived. I dis-

mounted, and, throwing my horse's bridle to the muleteer, advanced alone, seeking with my eyes some one to speak to. After having crossed an archway I entered a large courtyard, surrounded by very old battlements, whose casement windows were all closed. No one was to be seen. The most profound silence reigned, one might have thought the castle uninhabited. After having made the tour of the principal court I ventured to push a door which was partly open, and I saw before me the steps of a winding staircase. I groped my way up the staircase. On arriving at the top I found myself at the entrance of a grand saloon whose furniture dated at least from the Ligue. A lamp was lighted already and stood on the corner of a table, throwing sufficient light to enable me to perceive at a glance the Berganz carpet and high-backed fauteuil, the burnished candlesticks which were attached to the wall and loaded with great wax candles, and the chimney with its vast mantelpiece advancing like a dais of stone above the hearth; this saloon led to a

second apartment, where I heard the sharp barking of a little dog who doubtless perceived that a stranger was near, and was making a most furious noise. At the first knock which I gave to announce my presence I saw a rough girl dressed in green stuff, and whose head was covered with a brown muslin cap; the girl did not wait to hear my name, but ran toward a door beyond, crying: 'Mademoiselle Boinet! Mademoiselle Boinet!'

"A person of a certain age, whose dress was that of a servant of a well-ordered house, immediately appeared, and came curtsying towards me.

"When I had given my name she smiled knowingly, as if to intimate that she knew the motive of my visit, and said to me with a Parisian accent:

"'Your humble servant, sir; I will inform Madame la Baronne.'

"A moment had hardly elapsed when the double door was thrown open and the Baroness herself appeared before me, saying: 'Mon-

sieur de Champaubert, permit me to apologize to you . . . . I am mortified that you should have found no one below to receive you ; it was because we did not expect you until to-morrow.'

"It was now my turn to apologize for arriving thus unexpectedly, and the Baroness led the way to her apartment. When I had crossed the sill of the door of this apartment where the Baroness passed her life, I was so struck with the contrast between it and the large saloon, that I stopped short, saying :

"'Really, Madame la Baronne, this approaches the marvellous : you have transported to the summit of this mountain the saloon of one of the finest hotels of Versailles, or the Faubourg St. Germain.'

"'Eh ! yes, sir,' said she with a sigh : 'I am reduced to ensconcing myself in a corner of this old chateau ; when the curtains are drawn and the candles lighted I can believe myself still as at Paris, but if I venture to look out of the window the illusion is no longer possible—instead of

the gardens of the Luxembourg, I see below me the roofs of the village houses, and on all sides rocks and woods and mountains. In truth I have often been tempted to say, as did my late mother-in-law, who, having married the Baron's father, wrote from here to her uncle the Cardinal: "Here I am housed in such a manner as to have the eagles on my back and to be able to take the morn in my teeth."' At these words she laughed immoderately, and sank back nonchalantly into her sofa; after having motioned me to a seat beside herself and taken on her lap the little spaniel, which persisted in snapping at me. The Baroness was a little woman, slenderly and delicately made, who at the first glance seemed young, although her age was on the decline. Her toilette was rather out of date, but suited well her delicate features;. the rouge and powder which she wore gave her the lasting freshness of a family portrait; she wore as great-lady the incommodious train, and a furbelowed skirt weighed down by immense pockets of crinoline, and walked with incomparable grace on

shoes with heels of a prodigious height. I casually made all these observations, my mind being too preoccupied, and my heart too profoundly troubled to follow any other idea than that which absorbed me. At each instant I listened and looked round me, hoping that M'lle de Malepire would appear, and yet not daring to ask for her or even pronounce her name.

"'The Baron is at the chase as usual,' observed the Baroness, 'but he will soon return: *en attendant*, you will have some refreshment,—a little wine or *eau sucrée*.'

"I declined, but she insisted.

"'Surely you will take coffee with me; that you cannot refuse. M'lle Boinet, bring the *tête-à-tête*, and ring for some boiling water.'

"The maid pushed towards her mistress a little round table on which she placed a box of India wood. The Baroness opened this casket, where were disposed, in compartments of blue velvet, a sugar-bowl, a coffee-pot, and the two Sèvres cups which you see on the mantelpiece."

"Ah!" murmured I, pressing my hands to my burning forehead, "'tis as I thought!" The Marquis looked at me, smiled faintly, and continued:

"When the coffee was made, the Baroness herself served it in the two cups, and handed me one; then taking the other herself, she said: 'M'lle Boinet, say to my daughter that I wish to see her; nothing more, you understand.'

"I trembled and remained mute; my confusion made the Baroness smile, and she said to me with almost raillery:

"'If you were a girl, what then?'

"And after a moment of silence she added, in a more serious tone:

"'The child does not expect to see you here. Therefore do not be surprised if at first she does not give you the reception you merit.'

"'I merit nothing as yet,' said I quickly; 'I only hope: hope, to render myself worthy in her eyes of the happiness which is promised me.' Almost at the same instant M'lle de Malepire entered by a door opposite to that which opened

on the grand saloon. I heard her coming with a light step; but, on perceiving me, she stopped suddenly, and seemed as if tempted to fly. Her mother apparently understood this agitation, or rather hesitation; for she rose, went to her, and led her by the hand, saying to me in a cheerful tone, as she said so: 'This is my daughter, sir; a very wild little person; our solitude has made her thus, but I believe she will be quite amiable, when she has seen a little of the world.'

"I stammered a compliment, to which Marie de Malepire made no reply, save by a slight nod of the head; then she seated herself; her forehead serious, her countenance cold, almost haughty; evidently this humor, which her mother called wild and endeavored to excuse, approached an excess of reserve to the absence of the slightest desire to please; but such was the charm of her person, that spite of this visible indifference, she irresistibly attracted hearts. The portrait which you have before you gives but a feeble idea of the beautiful creature.

What pencil could render the freshness of her complexion, the soft passion of her glance, the languor of her smile? Ah! she was indeed a miracle of beauty; she had that invincible attraction which seduced the first man, and would have fascinated the serpent himself had he been formed of mortal clay. I was completely dazzled by so many charms; the agitation of my heart was so great that I lost all presence of mind. In truth, I must have appeared a perfect blockhead all that evening, when I felt for the first time that I was desperately in love.

"The Baroness took her coffee in little sips, and alone conducted the conversation.

"'My darling,' said she, glancing at her daughter's very simple toilette. 'I do not like to see you thus in your muslin *déshabille* and flat shoes. Why is your hair without powder?—one may easily see that M'lle Boinet did not dress you to-day; positively, you are frightful to behold.'

"'Really, mamma!' murmured Marie de Malepire, raising her eyes to the mirror, opposite to

which she happened to be seated, and in which I myself had been contemplating her for a quarter of an hour,—her beautiful hair negligently caught up behind with a tucking-comb; the dazzling fairness of her complexion, and the elegance of her figure in a corsage of blue India muslin, the skirt of which, as it floated around her, gave her the appearance of an angel surrounded by blue clouds.

"Her glance having encountered mine in the mirror, she immediately turned her head away, with an annoyed, rather than a timid air.

"'Excuse my daughter's *négligé*,' continued the Baroness, addressing herself to me. 'She did not know that we were to have a guest this evening, otherwise she would have appeared in evening dress. I should like her habitually to bestow more care on her toilette, but I cannot influence her on this point. She thinks it impossible to walk, except on flat-soled shoes.'

"'Mademoiselle is not altogether mistaken,' replied I: 'It would seem a difficult matter to

maintain one's equilibrium with shoes such as yours, Madame la Baronne.'

"'Not at all, I assure you,' replied she, quickly. 'It is, however, an acquired habit; I could not take a step outside my chamber without heels.'

"As she said this, she advanced her little foot encased in an extravagant shoe which permitted only her great toe to touch the floor, and struck together their high wooden heels which were covered with sheepskin.

"'I have often danced in shoes like these,' added she with a sigh. 'It was in an amateur ballet at the Hotel Richelieu, where I appeared as a shepherdess: it was long ago.' Then passing rapidly from these puerilities to graver subjects, she continued: 'It is a terrible thing, sir, to live as we do here, far from all society, and almost without any communication with the world. This sort of exile was quite novel to me when I first came to this wild country. I did not imagine that I should always remain here, and therefore took my isolation patiently, because I was

young, and thought that having so great a number of years before me, I had still sufficient time for the gayeties of the world; and thus I saw time and my youth pass without any uneasiness. The Baron is goodness and kindness personified; although this life suits him exactly, he would willingly have taken me to Paris. Every spring and autumn the question was discussed, but I had so many children that when it was necessary to set out on our journey, I was invariably detained. If I had not succeeded in establishing myself in this apartment, and if I had not poor Boinet with me, I believe I should have died of *ennui*.'

"'By a favor of Heaven there still remains to you one daughter, madame,' said I timidly; 'in occupying yourself with the education of mademoiselle, your daughter, you must have been less mindful of your isolation.'

"'True,' replied she, leaning forward to fasten in her daughter's hair a nœud of ribbon which she happened to perceive on a table near her. 'This dear child has never left me. It was I

who taught her to read. I wished also to teach her a little music, and to play on the harpsichord, but I have succeeded in neither,—her education has been almost by chance. Amongst the furniture which I had sent from Paris, there was a little library filled with books chosen by my late uncle, the Bailiff of Herbelay, a philosopher and a learned man, who was associated with all the wits of his time. My daughter has seized upon all these works, ancient and modern; her greatest pleasure is to read them, although they cannot be very amusing. To-day, she has passed all the afternoon *tête-à-tête* with a great volume.'

"I ventured to address Mademoiselle de Malepire, and ask her what book it was that interested her so intensely.

"'The Philosophical History of the two Indies, by the Abbot Raynal,' replied she: 'it is an admirable work; I am sorry, however, to see certain passages favorable to the Jesuits.'

"'You have taken part against them,' cried I then: "you are a Jansenist, mademoiselle.'

"'No, sir,' replied she with vivacity: 'I am nothing at all.'

"'I am glad my daughter likes reading. It is a great resource against *ennui*,' continued the Baroness, as she played with her snuff-box. 'As for myself I have not a mind capable of application, and I cannot endure serious books.'

"'But there are perhaps other means of diversion,' said I, astonished at this incurable frivolity. 'If you would take my counsel, madame, I would engage to take you walking on these beautiful pastoral mountains, where there are no less flowers than grass; surely, the most cultivated flower-garden could not offer a more smiling prospect.'

"'Yes, it is pretty,' said she negligently; 'but one cannot go to them as to the gardens of Versailles, by an even smooth road; to reach these fields one is obliged to cross I know not how many precipices.'

"'Then we must look nearer,' replied I. 'Were I in your place, Madame la Baronne, I should try to interest myself in what is pass-

ing around me; I should occupy myself with the details of rural life; I would go down to the village, and occasionally enter the little houses where the tenants live.'

"'Pooh!' exclaimed she, laughing; 'you know not what you are advising me to do. I see these good people every Sunday at church at a distance, and I declare to you that it is quite sufficient to prevent my wishing to take a nearer view of them.'

"It appeared to me that a burst of indignation shone in M'lle de Malepire's glance, and that on hearing this observation she made an involuntary movement as if to get away from her mother's side. She also appeared tacitly to approve of my words, an instant afterwards turned towards me a less severe countenance than she had hitherto worn, and said:

"'Is it true, monsieur, that one may find such beautiful flowers on our pastoral mountains?'

"'The most beautiful flowers of our gardens,' cried I: 'there are slopes entirely covered with a carpet of blue forget-me-nots and violet-capped

aconites, and many other rare and charming plants; but, mademoiselle, you surely must often have walked in that part of the domain of Malepire.'

"'Never, sir,' replied she, coldly. 'My mother never leaves this chateau except to go to church, and she does not permit me to take a single step without her.'

"'Here comes the Baron,' said Madame de Malepire, turning towards the half-open window: 'he is entering the court.'

"In short, one could hear a sound on that side; a sort of tumult,—at the same time the barking of dogs. Almost immediately, the floor of the grand saloon resounded with the tread of a heavy foot; and the Baron appeared with his pouch on his back, and his gun in his hand. In truth, if I had met him thus I should have taken him for a poacher. He threw his hat on the sofa, wiped his sunburnt face, and embraced me cordially, asking news of my father.

"'Good-day, wife; good-day, daughter,' said he: 'guess what game I have brought you.'

"'Animals or birds?' asked M'lle de Malepire, gliding her hand into the game-pouch.

"'Both,' replied the Baron triumphantly: 'I have there three white wood-hens, two partridges, and two hares which have kept me on the run all the morning. I would not have had them without that great boy who won the metal plate at the wrestling last year.'

"'Pinatel?' asked M'lle de Malepire.

"'The same,' replied the Baron, displaying the game: 'he was there with his dog,—a dog for which I would willingly give ten crowns, although he looks like a badger. This hare received the contents of my gun in its reins, and fell under the Bar of Piedfourche, at the foot of a precipice. My dogs did not wish to descend; Leander himself refused; then this Pinatel went in search of it with his little dog, and brought me the animal which you see. What have we here, I wonder?' he added, emptying his pouch. 'What little figure is this?'

"'Let us see it?' cried the two ladies.

"It was a figure rudely carved in wood, and very much resembled a Nuremberg doll.

"'What is this piece of wood intended to represent?' inquired Madame de Malepire, looking at it, but not touching it.

"'A hunter, I suppose,' replied the Baron: 'he has his gun in his hand.'

"'You are mistaken, father: it is a shepherd guarding his flocks, leaning on his crook,' interrupted M'lle de Malepire, taking possession of the little figure.

"'My daughter, put on your gloves before you touch that,' cried the Baroness; 'who knows through how many hands that ugly little image has passed? Some peasant has manufactured it in a stable, seated on his sheep's-litter.'

"'Yes, probably,' replied M'lle de Malepire, putting the figure into her pocket.

"'It is the image of some saint which Choiset, the gamekeeper, has slipped into my pouch, to bring me good luck,' said the Baron simply; then he disencumbered himself of his shoulder-belt, threw his powder-horn on the table, and

himself into the arm-chair, leaning his elbows on the cushion of pearl-colored damask. Madame de Malepire, seated opposite to him, played with her fan, and took from time to time a pinch of Spanish snuff, which she carried in a little box of burnished gold. You may imagine the contrast which these two persons formed: he, with his coarse vest of blue cloth, his great leathern gaiters reaching above his knees, his face burnt by the sun, his large coarse hands, and his colossal stature; she, with her trinkets, her laces, her diminutive figure, together with the airs and graces of a fine lady; for myself, I was completely stupefied.

"The Baron inquired as to what was passing at court, and naturally the conversation touched on the last events. The old gentleman did not understand the meaning of what he styled an audacious sedition, and he spoke of it with a scornful indignation. 'Sir,' said he to me, 'we have nothing to fear, the King is master; he will prove it when it suits him; with a gesture, with a single word, he will crush the factions.'

"'Who knows?' murmured M'lle de Malepire, with a singular expression.

"I remarked the movement, and commenced to think that the *Philosophical History of the Indies* had borne its fruits; but this tendency to new opinions I regarded as the dream of a generous mind, and did not annoy myself for the consequences which might ensue. We passed into the grand saloon for supper; on a sign from the Baroness I offered my hand to M'lle de Malepire and took a seat beside her; but she turned her eyes away from me, and, when I addressed any conversation to her, she answered me shortly and with marked coldness; still I could see plainly that she was neither sad nor disconcerted, on the contrary she appeared smiling and dreamy, which rendered her still more beautiful, and made a fool of me.

"After supper we returned to the drawing-room, which was brilliantly lighted and arranged as if a large company was expected, the *fauteuils* disposed in a demi-circle opposite the chimney, the hearth of which was veiled by a

screen worked in purple and gold, with the escutcheon of the Malepires in the centre. The harpsichord was open, and the card-table prepared before the sofa. The Baroness seated herself at the harpsichord, and played a little easy *sonata;* looking at the ceiling meanwhile, and balancing her head on one side with the air of a conqueror. During this music the Baron slept profoundly, and M'lle de Malepire gradually had retired to the embrasure of a window, the curtains of which hid her almost entirely from view. Thus I could see her profile; she was standing, her forehead resting on her hand, and looking through the window into the darkness, where might be distinguished three luminous points, indicative of the situation of the village houses, where the people had not yet retired.

"'Will you take a hand, monsieur?' inquired the Baroness, leaving the harpsichord. 'I stake you one cent at piquet; it was the favorite play of the Bailiff of Herbelay, and by great good-fortune I was his pupil, but it was so long ago that I fear I have forgotten his lessons.'

"The card-table was near the window; and, in seating myself, I was so placed that the curtain alone separated me from M'lle de Malepeire; she immediately left the window and went and seated herself behind her mother.

"'You never play, then, mademoiselle?' said I, mixing the cards.

"'At piquet? No, sir,' replied she.

"'The Baron cannot keep his eyes open after supper; as for my daughter, she has never been able to learn to distinguish the king of hearts from the knave of clubs; having no one for my partner, I sometimes amuse myself at a game called *patience;* it is a way of drawing the cards and reading the future.'

"'Will you grant me a sitting?' said I, jestingly.

"'Very willingly,' replied she in the same tone, and looking at her daughter. 'We will consult the cards to know how soon a handsome, dark young man will become the husband of a beautiful blonde.'

M'lle de Malepire blushed at this direct allu-

sion, and her pencilled eyebrows were slightly contracted. A moment after she rose and asked permission of her mother to retire, silently bowing her head to me as she passed from the room.

"'Ah, madame!' said I to the Baroness, 'I fear the cards will give me anything but a favorable answer.'

"'In that case they will not tell the truth,' replied she quickly, presenting me the cards; 'cut, my son-in-law.'

"We had five or six games at piquet; Madame de Malepire was delighted. 'It seems to me,' said she, 'that I am in Paris.'

"At the first stroke of midnight, the Baron woke, and said to me, looking at the clock, 'You must be very much fatigued; pardon me for having kept you so late; it is all owing to the Baroness; she makes me sit up until this hour every evening.'

"According to the usages of ancient hospitality, the old gentleman himself went before me with a torch, and conducted me to the apartment intended for my use; before leaving me, he pressed

my hand and said, with emotion, 'Your arrival has overwhelmed me with joy; good-night, my dear count, I will speak with you to-morrow morning.'

"Despite the fatigues of the day, I did not sleep much that night. M'lle de Malepire's image was constantly before me. If I closed my eyes I saw her in dreams, and when I awoke my thoughts continued the dream. I delighted in this sort of trouble, in this intoxication of my own heart, and it was with a sort of joy that I felt myself drawn, vanquished, and entirely subjugated by an attraction stronger than my reason or my will. This fever of mind, however, was dissipated with the dawn. The charming phantom which had beset me disappeared with the first rays of the sun, and I passed suddenly from an exalted hope to a desponding melancholy. I was in this mind, when the Baron entered my room the next morning. Although the castle clock had not yet chimed the hour of seven I was already dressed. The Baron seated himself beside me, and said without preamble:

"'My dear count, your reception here has been sufficient to convince you of our feelings towards you. You have already gained the heart of the Baroness; she is enchanted with your mind, your face, your manners. As for myself, I loved you at first sight, because you resemble so exactly your father, who is the finest man I ever knew. Now, it is your turn to acquaint me with your sentiments, and to tell me if you are pleased with regard to my daughter; if you find her sufficiently beautiful and agreeable.'

"'Ah, sir,' cried I, 'can you doubt it? She appears to me of surpassing beauty, and I shall esteem myself the happiest of men if I obtain her hand.'

"'In that case,' replied the Baron gayly, 'it only remains for us to register the contract, and to name the day for your wedding.'

"'You foresee no obstacle?' inquired I timidly.

"'What obstacle?' exclaimed he astonished: 'you have my consent and that of the Baroness.' I pressed his hand, which he tendered me in

sign of promise; and after having thus accepted this engagement of honor, which bound us one to the other better than a contract, I begged him as a favor to say nothing about our agreement as yet to M'lle de Malepire, and to grant me a few days to obtain from her own lips her consent.'

"'I can refuse you nothing,' replied he laughingly. 'Pay your court, "Handsome Amadis;" my daughter must have a heart of steel not to be compelled to return your love. Now,' added he, 'we will to breakfast, after which we will make a tour of the castle; we shall not be hurried, as the Baroness does not rise until mid-day, in time for dinner.'

"The Chateau de Malepire can hardly be more than a heap of ruins now; but at that time not a stone was detached from its old ramparts, and it contained some rare treasures. I saw, in the tower of the turret, a standard taken in the first crusade by one of the lords of Malepire. It was torn yellow silk, attached to a simple staff of black wood.

"The Baron stopped before this trophy, and said, as he contemplated it: 'The law which abolishes the titles of nobility cannot condemn these old Saracen banners as despicable rags; like ourselves, while our race exists, it will remain noble and right spite of revolutions.'

"I repeat the old gentleman's words, to give you an idea of his principles, and to make you understand the terrible inflexibility of which he gave proof shortly after; a little before the dinner-hour, the Baroness sent M'lle Boinet, to ask me to come to her apartment; I, to my great disappointment found her alone.

"'Good-morning, sir,' said she, graciously giving me her gloved hand to kiss. The Baron has just given me a hint of your interview of this morning; I was impatient to see you, that I might tell you how charmed I am with your proceedings; this delicacy is that of a gallant man. I very much approve of your wishing to gain the entire heart of my daughter.'

"'I shall try, madame,' said I, with a sigh.

"'The opportunity to pay your court is not

wanting,' replied the Baroness. 'As a commencement, I would advise you to go down to the parterre, where you will find my daughter. Go quickly; I have managed you a *tête-à-tête* of a quarter of an hour.'

"M'lle de Malepire was walking slowly under the shadow of an elm-tree which bordered the walk, and at the extremity of which there was a bower of verdure, if one might so call a trellis painted sea-green, which was entirely covered with climbing plants. I advanced, with a palpitating heart, into a little avenue parallel with the elms; but such was the preoccupation of M'lle that she did not perceive my approach. I saw her enter the arbor, and seat herself pensively on a bench where she had left her work-basket. She bent her head on her hand for an instant, and then resumed her work. Then I approached her. She rose on perceiving me. I understood that her intention was to leave me, and hastened to say to her: 'M'lle, your mother gave me permission to seek you; will you do me the favor to accept my arm on

your return to the drawing-room?' She inclined with a gesture which expressed neither consent nor refusal, and continued her work without raising her eyes to me. I was too much moved to find the first word of what I wished to say to her, and kept an embarrassed silence, which must have appeared strange to her. I was seated on the bench beside her, and had absently taken up the end of a long band of blue silk which she was embroidering with gold and silver leaves. This embroidery was of a very mediocre kind; nevertheless, I examined it as if I had before me a *chef d'œuvre* worthy of all admiration; and, after having sufficiently contemplated it, I respectfully replaced the corner of the scarf which I held before M'lle de Malepire, asking her for whom the work of her hands was destined. 'For him who merits it,' said she, holding it so as to see the effect of a fringe which she had just placed below the embroidery.

"'Is it then the question of a tournament?' said I, jestingly. 'In that case, mademoiselle, I shall enter the list to dispute with all comers

the prize which you destine for the vanquisher.'

"'I think not, sir,' replied she, smiling.

"'Why not, mademoiselle?' replied I passionately. 'Even should my life be in danger, I would willingly risk it for less than this; for a ribbon, a flower, that had ever belonged to you.'

"She immediately punished me for this folly by turning her head in a startled manner.

"'I beseech you,' added I, 'tell me what I must do to merit a thing so precious in my eyes.'

"'You must win it against a crowd of competitors,' replied she, with an air of gloomy raillery.

"'I will carry it,' cried I, full of confidence.

"She smiled again, and said quietly: 'You will not even try.'

"'What will prevent me?' replied I.

"'Next Sunday is the fête-day of the country,' continued she in the same tone; 'all the youth in the place will be here to take part in the games; during the afternoon the men will wrestle on the village green, and the most agile and the strongest will win this scarf. You see plainly,

sir, that you cannot contend with such competitors, and that I am right in saying that you will not even desire to dispute their prize.'

"I had the weakness to be confused and piqued at this explanation; and I immediately replied, 'So, mademoiselle, this scarf is to figure beside a pewter plate, which, I understood your father to say yesterday, is also to be a prize? I think it is doing great honor to that tavern utensil.'

"I, in my turn, had wounded her, and more deeply than I thought; she blushed, and said to me with an air of indignation and secret menace:

"'You despise the amusements of the people. Your pride disdains these simple workingmen, whose labor sustains you; but patience, patience!'

"As it was not the time to make professions to her of my philosophical and political faith, I simply replied:

"'Be persuaded that I neither despise nor disdain any one, not even the most humble. However, I have, I confess, sympathies and repugnances which belong to my education.'

"'To your prejudices,' murmured she.

"I did not repeat her words, which might have become the text for a discussion, but contented myself with adding: 'I decidedly prefer, it is true, the world in which I live; and I am convinced that your sentiments will be the same when you shall have taken your rank beside your equals, among the most beautiful, the most admired, the most honored.'

"She shook her head and said quietly, 'Never.'

"'What!' cried I, 'have you no desire to know the *élite* society of which your education has already given you an idea,—no wish to go out of your solitude, were it only to see the great city of Paris of which you have so often heard spoken?'

"'No, monsieur,' replied she, 'I fear, on the contrary, all which can take me from this place; and it would cause me inexpressible grief to leave our poor mountains.'

"This declaration, articulated in a firm and distinct tone, did not discourage me. It was evident, that if M'lle de Malepire was determined to

pass all her days in the old chateau where she was born, her choice must necessarily fall on me, if only for want of other aspirants. I foresaw, also, in the future, rising storms, which threatened to cloud the calm and brilliant existence of which I should wish to assure her in taking her away; nor did the idea of secluding myself in this corner of the world with her alarm me.

"'You are right perhaps,' said I, after a pause; 'you are right to prefer, above all things, the security and tranquillity which one may enjoy here. Moreover, your life elsewhere might be troubled by events which no human foresight could guard you against. If the Revolution is not quelled, Heaven only knows what is to become of the elegant and polished society of which I have spoken to you; better far would it be to bury one's self in the most profound retreat, than to be witness to the dissolution and decay of that old French society on which the new *régime* has already brought such a terrible blow. The distinctions of rank abolished, the nobility emi-

grated or dispersed in the provinces. In returning to Paris I shall, perhaps, find many *salons* deserted, many houses closed. With such prospects, I for one would willingly live in retirement from the world as a simple country gentleman.'

"'You, sir?' interrupted she abruptly: 'how absurd! you, like my mother, would be constantly complaining, and regretting the assemblies and balls, visits, games, and all the dissipations and pleasures to which you have been accustomed.'

"'With you, I should regret nothing,' replied I, with an involuntary burst of tenderness and devoted love. She recoiled to the extremity of the bench, elevating her shoulders with a certain air of pride and ill-nature, which would have disfigured any other woman, but which by a diabolical prestige rendered her still more charming. Then, without seeming to regard my presence, and as if fatigued with the interview, she leaned against the trellis, and commenced looking through the sort of window at the surrounding country. This movement disarranged her gauze hood; and, though she turned away her head, I

could see through her blonde hair the admirable contour of her face, her satin-like temple, and her swan-like neck, behind which floated two ends of black ribbon. There was a sufficiently long silence, during which I looked at her, feeling troubled and charmed, waiting until she should turn her eyes towards me and not daring to address her. She had not changed her attitude and appeared plunged in a profound reverie. Suddenly I saw her tremble and blush: one might almost have counted the beatings of her heart, and she leaned against the trellis like one about to faint under the excess of her emotion. I had risen hastily and looked over her shoulder before, behind, everywhere around, to see if I could discover the cause of so great emotion; but it was useless: no one was passing under the castle walls; all around was quiet and deserted, and beyond I could see no one but the laundresses, occupied in spreading out linen to dry near the fountain, where my mule-driver was giving drink to his beasts of burden, and below the village some straggling peasants, and a few

wandering shepherds in search of their scattered flocks. All this lasted but a moment; M'lle de Malepire breathed heavily, and passed her handkerchief over her cheek, from which the brilliant red had almost faded, and turned round with an air of tranquillity and pride, which showed plainly that she thought I had observed nothing of her emotion. In fact, I was somewhat in doubt, not knowing how to account for what I had seen, and almost ready to believe that I had been mistaken. A moment after, the first stroke of midday sounded, and at the same time a bell chimed to announce dinner. M'lle de Malepire rose, and I was about to offer my arm, when she advanced under pretext of gathering a bouquet in the parterre. I rejoined her only at the door of the dining-room; there she nodded her head slightly, and put the tips of her fingers on the sleeve of my coat, and thus we entered together.

"During dinner, the conversation again turned upon politics, and on the events which had occurred during the last few months.

"'The consequences of these disorders are

apparent even here,' said the Baron to me: 'our peasantry are animated by a bad spirit, especially the youth; a sort of agitation reigns throughout the whole province, and the political news stimulates this effervescence.'

"'The political news!' cried I. 'Ah! how do these worthy people hear the news?'

"'By numerous and indefatigable messengers,' replied the Baron; 'by these wandering tradesmen who infest the hamlets and the provinces with their merchandise on their backs; by these herculean vagabonds whose only calling is to haunt the fairs and fêtes of the villages to make assaults at the race, and at the wrestlings. The news which they retail is transmitted from mouth to mouth with inconceivable rapidity. These are the agents of disorder who have already done so much harm. Lastly, they circulated a report that the Assembly had decreed the demolition of all lordly habitations, from fortified castles to small manors. Then the peasants swept like an avalanche in the lower province, and they marched to the assault of

Maussane Castle, a fine chateau built in the modern style, which they entered. The next day, a detachment from a regiment in Bourgogne, cantoned at D——, arrived to repress this sedition; but too late. The peasants were dispersed after having devastated, pillaged, and burned the castle.'

"'A country where such atrocities are committed is lost,' said I, sorrowfully.

"'The times are troubled, but I am satisfied as to the issue of events,' added the Baron with imperturbable confidence. 'It is not the first time that factions have devastated the kingdom, and our fathers knew what civil war was. We will do as they did: we will defend our rights, our laws, and our faith. These old walls were besieged more than once during the time of the Ligue; but the Huguenots never scaled them.'

"On leaving the table, the Baron took his gun to make the tour of his cornfields, a three-mile promenade, which usually kept him till nightfall. I therefore remained *tête-à-tête* with the Baroness, for M'lle de Malepire had disappeared as

soon as we entered the drawing-room. I followed her with my eyes; she entered a small apartment, the door of which remained partly open, and as she walked I could vaguely distinguish her shadow on the polished oaken floor.

"'Well, sir, did you succeed in your courting?' inquired the Baroness, seating herself in the arm-chair.

"'Alas! Yes, madame,' replied I; 'but I am very much discouraged.'

"'Bah!' exclaimed she, 'I see no reason why you should be. My daughter, I know, is somewhat diffident; she may not treat you favorably at first, although, at heart, she must render justice to your merit. It will take time, perhaps, to make yourself beloved by this *belle indifférente;* but no matter, you will marry her meanwhile; I see nothing to prevent.'

"The inexplicable occurrence which had annoyed me in the morning returned to my memory, and I said, hesitatingly:

"'But if another, more fortunate than myself, has already touched her heart?'

"At this supposition the Baroness raised her hands to heaven, exclaiming:

"'Why, sir, there is not, within ten leagues around, a man whom a well-born girl could look at; you have not the shadow of a rival; no one frequents here; for I do not consider some old gentlemen in the neighborhood, who sometimes dine here, after having been hunting with the Baron; that is, M. de la Tusette, joint lord of Piedfourche; M. de Verdache, noble glass-founder; M. de Cadarasse, ancient falconer to the King; all very worthy men, and of good nobility, I admit, but extremely dull company.'

"While the Baroness was thus reassuring me, I gazed mechanically at an oval frame of most exquisite workmanship, in which figured a bad engraving, which was altogether unworthy of so magnificent a setting, and which represented the heroine of Richardson at the moment of flying from her father's house.

"'You think they have done too much honor to that print?' said the Baroness, changing the subject with her usual volatility, 'I am alto-

gether of your opinion, although it was I who caused it to be placed there. You shall judge if I had good reason. The first year of my marriage, I was so overcome with *ennui* that I thought I must die of it. The Baron tried every means to restore me. Having heard that there was an Italian artist going from one castle to another in search of employment, he concluded to send for him, that he might take my portrait. At the same time he wrote to Paris for a beautiful frame and a box of colors, as I like only pastel portraits, and would have mine done in no other way. The Italian came, at the end of three or four months. I was then so nervous and weak that I could not stand or take a single step. However, out of compliment to the Baron, I consented to have my portrait taken ; but, after the first sitting, I was obliged to give up the idea. My health became so very poor that I found it impossible to leave my bed. The first time that I was able to leave my room, the Baron brought me here, and made me sit down opposite this frame, and said to me in a tone of satisfaction :

"Our Italian painter only required to see you once, in order to set himself to work. Raise your eyes, my dear, and tell me if you recognize your features in that face." I uttered a cry : the wretch had painted me in oils ; added to which, his had been the beautiful idea of dressing me in a Turkish or Roman costume, it was impossible to tell which, with a yellow drapery instead of a dress-waist, and a kind of a turban around my hair, without powder. "Ah, sir!" said I to the Baron, "I could not endure to see myself thus, even in a picture ; and, with your permission, I will have the canvas taken up to the lumber-room," which was accordingly done. The frame remained, and Boinet put this engraving in its place. I locked up the box of pastels, hoping that some other artist would pass this way. But foreign artists seldom pass here now, and here am I indefinitely replaced by this Clarissa Harlowe.'

"'Perhaps, madame,' said I, 'as I know something of drawing, you will permit me to take your portrait.'

"'No, no, I thank you; the time for that is past,' replied she, with a melancholy vivacity. 'To have a portrait painted, one must be young like my daughter. It is her portrait which I should like to see in this frame.'

"'If she will permit it, I will commence it by to-morrow,' said I, charmed with the idea.

"'Immediately,' cried the Baroness: 'it is only necessary to inform my daughter.'

"And at the same time she beckoned me to follow her into the little room. M'lle de Malepire was standing reading near a library, doubtless that of the good man d'Herbelay. On perceiving us she quickly threw down her book, not, however, unobserved by me. When her mother had announced to her my wish to take her portrait, she manifested neither satisfaction nor displeasure, and replied briefly, raising nonchalantly the long curls of her hair:

"'I am ready.'

"'Not at all, mademoiselle!' cried her mother: 'I wish your hair to be dressed *en nymphe*, with powder and sky-blue ribbons.'

"'Yes, mamma,' replied she with an air of resignation.

"'Go to your room with Boinet,' continued the Baroness; 'whilst she is dressing you, I will make the necessary preparations here.'

"Finding myself alone for an instant, I was tempted to cast my eyes on the book which M'lle de Malepire had been reading. It was the 'Nouvelle Héloïse.' I immediately remembered this sentence in the preface: 'She who dares read a single page in this book is a lost girl.' Happily, said I to myself, there is no St. Preux here. I was too young and too much in love for this discovery to create in my mind any graver reflections, and I put the volume back in its place merely regretting that chance had thrown it into the hands of Marie de Malepire.

"Like all persons who lead a totally idle life, the Baroness was excessively active on the rare occasions when she found anything to interest her. She herself presided over the arrangement of the little room, which she transformed into an artist's studio, and where she had brought the box of

colors, the leaves of vellum, and all the accessories which the Italian painter had before used. Marie de Malepire, dressed and decked out as her mother had ordered, assisted with an indifferent air in all these preparations. When they were terminated, she remarked to the Baroness, that, as the day was waning, I would not have time even to sketch her portrait.

"'You are right, my daughter,' said the latter; 'furthermore, it is the hour for supper; ring, I pray you, and tell Boinet to serve cakes and fruit.'

"A little table was spread in the drawing-room; hither the supper was brought. That which the Baroness dignified by the name of fruit consisted of a plate of little yellow peaches, such as those with which I was regaled this afternoon with great pleasure. M'lle Boinet took them alternately on the end of a fork and peeled them with a silver-bladed knife and dressed them with wine and sugar. The Baroness served me some, remarking with a sigh as she did so, that it was the only fruit to be obtained there.

"'I find them delicious,' was my reply.

"'You are easily suited,' cried she. 'They would not be eatable if Boinet had not a talent for dressing them with Malvoisie wine. In the season she also prepares me walnuts in the same way. She is a perfect treasure; she does everything so neatly and adroitly as to render her services extremely agreeable. I did wish her to marry one of the villagers, whom she might have civilized in a measure so that I could have made him *valet de chambre;* but she could not make up her mind to marry one of these rustics.'

"'Ah, Madame! that would have done her too much honor,' said Marie de Malepire, with animation. 'These rustics are freemen, while she is in a servile condition.'

"'Good heavens! what is the meaning of these large words?' exclaimed the Baroness, disdainfully. 'Where have you learned this folly, my daughter? M'lle Boinet has, owing to her education and her sentiments, been raised above that state which you qualify a servile condition; know also that she would be degrading herself to marry any one of inferior intelligence or educa-

tion, like these stupid and ignorant peasants, whom you call freemen.'

"At this sort of lecture, M'lle de Malepire blushed vividly, and seemed very angry and confused. I was surprised, that a simple contradiction should throw her into so violent a temper; but my thoughts went no further. Nevertheless, I ought to have understood how great an abyss her secret education had put between us. I should have been more afraid of the sentiments and the convictions which she so often manifested, and have foreseen to what they would lead. Yes, I should have gone away and renounced forever this odious, though charming girl; perhaps I might thus have saved her from a great misfortune, but I remained, and her destiny was accomplished."

CHAPTER IV.

The Marquis paused at these words, and raising his eyes towards the pastel, he considered with melancholy attention the ravishing face which appeared to listen and smile; then he continued: "I installed myself in my impromptu studio, and in three or four days I finished this portrait."

"And you signed it with your initials," cried Dom Gérusac: "there is an M and a C at the foot of the lattice against the border."

"What! you have examined this anonymous portrait with so much attention?" replied the Marquis. "It is by no means a *chef-d'œuvre.*"

"No, not exactly," murmured my good uncle with his usual *naïveté.*

"But it was a perfect likeness, and naturally they thought it admirable. You may imagine, my dear Thomas, what was passing in my poor infatuated heart during the four days that I gazed

on the face whose beauties I so lovingly reproduced. The sittings lasted several hours at a time, for the Baroness was excessively impatient to see my work finished. As soon as she had made her toilette in the morning she came to the little apartment where I was, and made her daughter come also, she came robed and with her hair arranged as you see it there. She entered slowly, and seated herself at a distance, and arranged the skirt of her dress—threw on me a haughty glance—then crossed her beautiful arms, and remained immovable in the attitude which I had requested. I then took my crayons, and the Baroness said to her, with a comical impatience, 'Smile, my daughter, do smile!' Notwithstanding this injunction, she remained serious and proud; but soon her countenance changed without her being aware of it; her charming head inclined with involuntary nonchalance, and she fell into a silent reverie, which I was careful not to distract, as it gave to her features their natural expression. A soft flame then illuminated her limpid eyes, and occasionally she looked at

me involuntarily, with the divine smile which I have put upon the lips of this portrait. Two or three times during these long sittings I remained a few minutes alone with her. Her countenance changed then to an expression of cold reserve, as if to make me understand that I would displease her if I broke the silence. But I was so passionately in love, and so obstinately hopeful, that all these marks of disdain and indifference did not dishearten me. I persisted in thinking that my tenderness and my attention would at last touch the heart of this haughty person, and accustomed myself to the thought of marrying her in the meantime, as said the Baroness.

"The Baron was ignorant that I was doing his daughter's portrait. It was a surprise which Madame de Malepire had prepared for him with all the discretion of which she was capable. It had not been a very difficult matter to keep this little secret from him; whilst I was at work he was at the chase, and in the evening he never thought of inquiring how I had passed my time during the day.

"When my work was completed, it was put into the frame, and I myself hung it in the drawing-room opposite the arm-chair in which the Baron took his evening nap.

"The same day, at sunset, the Baroness had the blinds closed, and the chandelier, which was in the centre of the room, lighted. M'lle Boinet had despoiled the parterre to form, with garlands of leaves, a colossal character, which she attached to the lower part of the frame. It consisted of two M's interlaced and surmounted by a colossal heraldic crown. The ingenious individual had already discovered that my name was Maximian.

"'That is a charming idea,' said the Baroness, delighted. 'My daughter, see those initials.'

"'They are mine,' interrupted the latter, as if to protest against the interpretation which her mother gave. 'This double M signifies Marie de Malepire.'

"At this very moment the Baron entered; his wife ran to him, and conducted him in triumph to the door of the drawing-room.

"'Ah!' exclaimed he, perceiving his daughter's portrait. 'What a beautiful picture! What a resemblance! It is admirable.'

"The Baroness enjoyed his surprise for an instant; then she said to him, smiling:

"'You do not ask the name of the artist.'

"'True, my dear: I owe him many thanks;' replied he good-naturedly.

"'Here he is,' said the Baroness, taking my hand and drawing me before him: 'his modesty prevents him from showing himself.'

"The old gentleman embraced me with emotion, and said, with an air of softened gayety:

"'We will make an exchange: I give you the model, and you leave me the portrait.' At the same time he turned towards his daughter, and motioned her to give him her hand, that he might put it in mine; but she drew back, and looking down, took refuge behind her mother.

"'You have my promise,' added the Baron in a more serious tone: 'that is sufficient.'

"The same evening, at supper, the Baron said to his wife: 'You have not forgotten, dear, that

to-morrow is St. Lazarus' Day, the feast-day of the country,—Provence?'

"'I confess, I had given it no thought,' replied she carelessly.

"'Many people have already come;' replied the Baron. 'On my return from the chase, I could see from afar the colporteurs and Bohemians who usually encamp the night before on the meadow. The people of the lower provinces are also coming up in crowds; to-morrow, when the people from the surrounding villages have come, there will be a great concourse. Formerly,' said he, addressing himself to me, 'it was customary for the wife or daughter of a lord to open the ball with one of the peasant-boys. The Baroness has abolished this custom, but last year my daughter revived it; she, like her grandmother, and great-grandmother, danced with the peasants. This year, it will be conducted differently: to-morrow, we will not go down to the village, except for parochial mass.'

"'Why, papa, shall we not join the games?'

"'No, daughter,' replied he firmly: 'the times

have changed, and you cannot reappear in a place where you will not have due respect paid you.'

"'Shall you not very much regret this field-ball and this village reunion?' added the Baroness, with an air of indulgent reproach. 'The fine dancers, upon my word! a troup of rustics all hot and perspiring, dressed in clothes warm enough for winter, a vest of green stuff, with short pantaloons to match, and coarse woollen stockings and great iron shoes.'

"'But, mamma, the dress is of no consequence,' cried M'lle de Malepire, with continued indignation: 'the dress is the only coarse part of these men. The simplicity of their manners is preferable to the affectations of our polite society; and, in spite of the differences which shock you so much, one can readily tolerate their society.'

"'In the open air it might be tolerable,' replied the Baroness, with a little shrug of her shoulders.

"At this moment I remembered the blue silk scarf, and said thoughtlessly to the Baron: 'The

vanquisher at the wrestling will not then receive the prize of honor from the hands of M'lle de Malepire ?'

"'He will come here afterwards to get it,' replied the old gentleman: 'The Baroness will receive him below in the greenroom,—him and his *cortegé*. It is a simple affair.'

"Then he rose, and gave his hand to the Baroness to pass into the drawing-room. I remained behind an instant with M'lle de Malepire.

"'To-morrow,' said I to her in an undertone, and in a trembling voice, 'to-morrow your mother will speak to you, with regard to what has been determined on. My happiness depends on your answer, as I should not be happy without your free consent.'

"'She drew back a few paces, and murmured, looking fixedly at me meanwhile:

"'What! so soon?'

"'Pardon, pardon me!' replied I, dismayed. The depth of my love justifies me.'

"'Would you marry me in spite of myself?' replied she coldly.

"I only replied by a sign of the head, and looking at her with an air of passionate desperation.

"'Ah! you will go so far!' exclaimed she, starting back: 'well, we shall see.'

"Early the next morning M'lle Boinet came to tell me that they were going to church. I found the Baroness dressed as if for a royal mass, in a robe of India satin and three large plumes in her head-dress. Marie de Malepire was also in full toilette: she wore a robe of pale blue silk, and a little straw hat with long ends of blue ribbon floating over her shoulders. When I approached to salute her, she appeared so indifferent and *distrait* that I was stunned. I had expected to find her countenance less tranquil. The Baroness beckoned me to come to her. 'I have said nothing to her as yet,' said she to me in a low voice. 'There is is time enough; let us go.'

"The road to the village was veritably a staircase cut in rock. Madame de Malepire was taken over it in a sedan chair, the Baron escorted his daughter, and I walked beside them. The whole household followed; that is to say, a dozen valets

and servants; at the head walked M'lle Boinet and Choiset the gamekeeper.

"There was a crowd before the church. The villagers, in holiday attire, formed noisy groups around the twin trees which shaded the place; below in the meadows the crowd was not so dense. I remarked that the greater part of the young peasants wore the so-called national colors, either in their hats or the button-hole of their coats. When the Baron and his family appeared every eye was turned towards us, and there was a moment of silence. The groups fell back slowly to let us pass. Some of the old men put their hands to their hats, but the greater part dispensed with this mark of respect. Notwithstanding the recent attack against the prerogatives of the nobility, the lordly seat still remained in the parish church. It was an admirable piece of workmanship, in oak wood. The back was very high, and surmounted by a dais ornamented with fine sculpture. On each panel might be seen the escutcheon of the house of Malepire and their proud motto in the provincial dialect: *Fuero un degun.*

"On entering the nave I perceived, against one of the pillars, a picture done in embroidery which attracted my attention. It was a votive offering. Notwithstanding the insufficiency of the means of execution, one could easily recognize the site and the personages. A funeral procession was making a halt at Malepire's Pass. The coffin was on the first projection, at the foot of a rock; and the priest was extending his hands towards heaven, and looking at the young corpse which was rising from its shroud. Madame de Malepire perceived that I had my eyes fixed on this singular piece of workmanship, and came to me and said, while looking affectionately at her daughter, with a spontaneous burst of tenderness, 'They were going to bury her alive from me.'

"'God has restored her to you by a miracle,' replied I, moved at this involuntary emotion; 'and this picture, doubtless, you had made as a tribute of thanks.'

"'It was I who embroidered it with my own hands,' interrupted she; 'I worked at it a year.'

"The Baron had ensconced himself in the seat

of honor between his wife and daughter, and motioned to an empty space beside him, which he invited me to take. The Baron's servants knelt a little lower down on the border of the foot-carpet spread over the flagging. We thus formed a distinct group between the sanctuary and the principal nave, to which the villagers and peasants were hastening. Our presence had caused a profound agitation among that crowd. When the Baroness crossed the church, with a smiling and lofty bearing, and her plumes undulating, and the heels of her little boots sounding, all faces were turned towards her with an expression of malevolent curiosity; and no sooner had we taken our places on the seigniorial seat, than the hostility became more manifest. At this unexpected demonstration, the Baroness, who had been tranquilly reading her *livre d heures*, raised her head with an air of surprise, and said to her daughter, 'What is it they want?'

"'That all should worship God in the same rank,' replied she excitedly.

"The Baron turned pale, and looked haughtily

around him with an expression of annoyance. Happily this state of things was not prolonged. The priest appeared with his acolytes ; and, when they were before the altar, the people knelt in silence at the lower part of the church. Some of them, however, advanced in good order as far as the chancel. There they put themselves in a line; and, after having made a genuflection, they remained standing opposite the seigniorial seat.

"'It is their right,' said the Baron turning to me, and speaking in a low tone: 'from time immemorial, the abbat or prince of the youths and his companions have occupied this place on fête days.'

"The prince of the youths, or abbat, and his suite wore sprigs of green in their hats, and a sort of scarf tied crosswise beneath that coarse stuff vest which was so revolting to the Baroness. They were robust peasants of a swarthy complexion and athletic form ; the abbat especially was a magnificent specimen of muscular power. He was of colossal stature, and his accurate features reminded one of the fine obtuse head of an

ancient gladiator. This man's costume differed somewhat from that of the peasantry; yellow leather gaiters replaced the woollen stockings, and a jacket of striped material, the rest of coarse green stuff. I remarked all this vaguely. I was preoccupied by an inquietude which increased as the time for the reading-out of the betrothment approached. I waited, in a state of inexpressible agitation, the accomplishment of that formality. The Baroness was confident of all, notwithstanding her silence on the subject to her daughter; and, from time to time, she turned her eyes towards me as if to encourage and congratulate me on my felicity. At last the priest came forward as far as the holy table, with a paper in his hand, and read in a loud voice, during a most profound silence, 'There is a promise of marriage between the very high and very excellent Lord Maximian de Monville, Count of Champaubert, and the very high and very excellent Demoiselle Madeleine Marie de Malepire, etc.'

"A murmur rose in the nave; it was the titles and qualifications which excited the indignation

of the populace, which murmur, however, ceased almost ere it had begun. I looked at Marie de Malepire; she had not changed countenance, but was very pale, and the slight trembling of her hands betrayed the emotion which she tried to repress.

"'Compose yourself,' said the Baroness, affectionately to her: 'there is nothing to astonish you in this, and still less to afflict.'

"'I am quiet, madame,' replied she, in an altered voice, and turning her head away.

"I remarked nothing more, I saw nothing; however, some circumstances occurred which might have enlightened me, and made me know that I had a rival.

"When mass was over, the Baron said to me, as he stood aside to let me pass:

"'Now that your marriage has been announced in public, pass on, count, and give your arm to your *fiancée*.'

"I made my approach with a palpitating heart. M'lle de Malepire put her arm unhesitatingly through mine, and thus we crossed the church

together. The crowd had already passed on and awaited us outside. The little band, at the head of which was the abbat, advanced; he drew off his hat, and addressed the Baron in the provincial tongue.

"'What does he say?' asked Madame de Malepire, in a whisper, of her daughter.

"'He is asking us to attend the games,' replied she coldly.

"'At a distance, I have no objection,' replied the Baroness: 'I have already ordered seats to be placed in the parterre, the length of the parapet; in that situation we can see what is being done here as well as if we were nearer; we must also invite this great fellow and his friends to come up to the castle and drink a glass of wine, and receive the beautiful scarf which you have taken the trouble to embroider. It is useless for me to tell them so in French: they would not understand me. Do you speak to them, my darling, and explain the thing in provincial.'

"'It has already been done,' replied she: 'my

father has just announced to them that you will receive them this evening.'

"'Let us get out of this crowd as quickly as possible,' cried the Baroness, reëntering her sedan chair: 'we shall be suffocated.'

In truth, we were squeezed and elbowed in an incommodious manner; the crowd became almost insolent; they barred the passage-way, and threw themselves tumultuously before us. However, there were as yet no cries or any other annoying manifestations.

"'I will take the lead,' said the Baron to me: 'escort my daughter.'

"I passed M'lle de Malepire's arm through mine, that we might better make our way through the crowd; but she abruptly disengaged herself, and turning towards the abbat, said to him, as if putting herself under his protection: 'Pinatel, pass before us.'

"The colossus obeyed: he breasted the multitude, pushing and hooting all those before him, and thus opened a passage for us. When we were outside the green, he faced about without

saying a word, and went and rejoined his companions.

"In silence we took the road to the castle; Marie de Malepire went ahead of all of us, and the Baron walked near me with a serious and agitated air.

"'You saw,' said he to me, at last, 'you saw the disposition of those people; we have been all but insulted; who knows how far this thing may go? It is quite time that the King admonishes, when his nobility are exposed to a conflict with the peasantry. Meanwhile, I shall take measures for our safety; we will no longer go down to the village.'

"'I am quite of your opinion,' interrupted the Baroness, putting her head out of the sedan chair. 'We will remain at home, and have our daughter married in the chapel of the chateau. Do you know, Baron, that Boinet heard the people behind her say that in all other parishes the seigniorial seat had been abolished? you will perhaps be obliged to have yours removed.'

"'Never,' cried he. 'I have unhesitatingly

renounced all useful rights, such as the quit-rents, champerty, thirlage, weighing, reliefs, dues on sales of inheritance. All these have been abolished; but I shall not so abandon honorary rights, and violence alone can despoil me of them.'

"On entering the house, I tried to speak to M'lle de Malepire; but she obstinately avoided an interview. In the afternoon, however, I succeeded in retaining her a moment, just as we were descending to the parterre; and I said to her, in a penetrating tone:

"'Ah, mademoiselle! will you not pardon my happiness? Alas! what must I do to touch your heart, to render myself worthy of your choice? If you knew the depth of my love, your heart perhaps would not be so slow in responding to it.'

"And, as she hastened on without answering me, I added: 'Suffer me to speak to you of my sentiments; you are free to do so, now that you see in me a betrothed lover.'

"'Say a marrying man,' interrupted she, with an accent of bitter raillery.

"I was reminded of the 'Nouvelle Héloïse,' and

that letter in which the sensual and pedantic daughter of the Baron d'Etange thus qualifies the two suitors whom she disdains. A new suspicion crossed my mind ; and I cried, transported with a vague and furious jealousy :

"'Who, then, is the St. Preux to whom you thus sacrifice me ?'

"'You shall soon know,' replied she boldly ; And, without adding another word, she hastened to the parterre.

"I avow, that the thought of renouncing her had not so much as presented itself to my mind. I loved her with a love too violent and too egotistical not to dispute it even with a fortunate rival, and had begun to think without fear or scruple of a forced marriage. The passion which animated me was ungovernable. I resolved to speak to the Baron that very evening. It was only necessary to draw up the contract by the next day, and in three days I might marry her. I formed all these plans and resolutions, seated on the parapet beside the Baroness, and looking at what was passing on the

village green. The spectacle was sufficiently confused: there was hardly any one on the meadow, and the crowd pressed tumultuously around an inclosure formed by cords attached to stakes firmly planted in the ground. At one of the extremities of this list rose a pole, at the top of which glittered a pewter plate highly polished, and shining like a great mirror for skylarks; and at the opposite extremity a drum and a hurdy-gurdy formed the orchestra, and discoursed the most discordant sounds that human ears ever heard. Marie de Malepire, seated near her mother, kept her eyes fixed on this scene. I observed it with a feeling of inexplicable tenderness, grief, and sombre jealousy; she affected an attitude calm and assured; but her countenance and the feverish brilliancy of her complexion betrayed her secret agitation.

"'Do look, count,' said the Baroness to me: 'the games have commenced.'

"Two men, almost entirely destitute of clothing, entered the lists and commenced wrestling; one was quickly floored, and retired in silence; the

other remained standing and awaiting another adversary, who in turn remained master of the field, and was quickly vanquished by a new champion. During an hour the wrestlers succeeded each other in this manner in the centre of the arena, and rolled in the dust one after the other amid the applause or the hisses of the crowd according as they had done well or ill.

"Since the commencement of this tournament, the Baroness had turned to me, saying, with a slight yawn: 'You must admit that this is somewhat monotonous, especially when one knows beforehand who is to be the vanquisher. The abbat will end by flooring them all, as he did last year.'

"'He is a prodigiously strong fellow and a fine poacher,' added the Baron; 'Had he been of the work-people I should have offered him the living after Choiset, and some little employment in my woods as a subsistence meanwhile.'

"A moment after, the Baroness replied, 'Decidedly, it is refined, this combat of fist-blows; let us take a tour in the parterre.'

"I think I have already said that the parterre was a platform supported by the ramparts, and surrounded by slender elms, between which wound little paths bordered by woods. This miniature Babylonian garden extended before the modern façade of the chateau, which rested on the old construction restored and rejuvenated by a uniform tint of paint. At one of the angles of this part of the building, which was entirely occupied by the apartments of the Baroness, there was a little tower which came out beyond the ramparts, and overlooked the precipice, whose green depths were level with the plain. In olden times, this tower had been called the observatory; and, when the country was disturbed, a sentinel was placed in this practical little cell at the summit, to signalize the approach of the enemy. At a later date the sentinel's box had been replaced by a slanting roof, and a window had been cut in the first story, from which was suspended a stone balcony tapestried with briars and blackish moss. Marie de Malepire's apartment was in this old

tower. The Baroness stopped, and, pointing with a little gold-headed cane, which she carried in her hand, said:

"'I cannot look out of that window without having a vertigo. My daughter has less sensitive nerves: often, at evening, I have found her dreaming by the light of the moon, and leaning her elbows on that swallow's-nest.'

"I advanced my head outside of the parapet to measure, by my eye, the prodigious height of the wall, and I murmured: 'Assuredly, if there were a Lindor here, he could not come and sing loud enough to be heard under Rosina's balcony.'

"A little before sunset the acclamations became louder as they rose from the green, and we saw that the metal plate had disappeared from the top of the pole.

"'It is over,' said the Baroness, looking through the folds of her fan; 'the conqueror is crowned; he comes with his *cortége*; they are coming here; let us enter.'

"Daylight faded rapidly; but the villagers had lighted their torches of resinous wood, which

they held in their hands, and from which the fitful glare formed an illumination of a most singular effect. We could perceive, from the drawing-room windows, groups which were marching through the village to the beating of a drum, and singing patriotic refrains, and girls and boys dancing in cadence on the green.

"A moment after, Choiset, the gamekeeper, arrived.

"'Here is the abbat,' said he hastily, 'and a great many people with him. I come to take orders from the Baron.'

"'You are to permit only him and his twelve guard of honor to enter; and if the others are troublesome, and attempt to force the passage, execute my previous orders.'

"'Come,' said the Baroness gayly, 'let us give audience to these gallant shepherds. Your arm, Baron; my daughter, follow us.'

"M'lle de Malepire advanced, and carried the scarf unfolded. It appeared to me that she was pale, and that her hands trembled. All three descended; I did not follow them. This sort of

ceremony displeased me, and I did not wish to witness the putting on of the scarf. I remained alone in the drawing-room, standing against one of the windows and looking absently before me. The sky was without either star or moonlight; the obscurity in the parterre was most profound; and the evening wind moaned sadly through the trees. I leaned my head on my hands, and fell into a melancholy reverie, and began to repent of my implacable resolutions. The only avowal which M'lle de Malepire had let escape had thrown me into a transport of jealousy akin to hate. Then, as I commented on the cruel words which had come from her lips, I commenced to persuade myself not to believe it, that it was a threat, a falsehood, and that I had no rival. This certitude acquired, I excused all: I pardoned her coldness and disdain, which I felt was killing me. I was ready to kneel to this haughty girl, and tell her I adored her, and would continue to do so without recompense, if it was her will, her caprice. Whilst I was abandoning myself to these alternatives of hatred and tenderness, I

saw a shadow pass slowly under the window and follow the wall, like one who gropes his way feeling for a door or something to take hold of. Although the fact itself was nothing very noticeable, I followed this vague shadow with my eyes; but the darkness was so great that it disappeared before I could note which direction it took. An instant after, the Baroness's little dog jumped up, and commenced growling; I turned around; the door of the room which had served me as a studio was partly open, and I thought I could distinguish the sound of a stealthy footstep on the oaken floor. This conviction was so acute that I cried out, 'Who goes there?' There was no answer, then I took a light and entered the little studio; the dog followed closely, and barked; there was no one there, absolutely no one, but the door beyond was just closed, doubtless by the wind. This door was that of a passage which led to the turret; I walked straight ahead, raising the torch, and entered the apartment belonging to M'lle de Malepire. It was a small room without angles or recesses. I surveyed it at a glance;

there was no way to get out of it, or into it, except through the door on the sill of which the little dog had stopped, all trembling with fear. The bed had neither curtains or valence, and was simply spread with a white coverlid. A heavy brocatel curtain was drawn before the window; and on the chimney-piece, which was directly opposite the door, there was an antique mirror, at the base of which I remarked that ugly little wooden figure which the Baron had found in his game-pouch. This examination lasted but half a minute; I went out again, and closed the door behind me, and returned to the drawing-room, without noticing the fury of Carlin, who barked himself hoarse in the passage-way.

"Almost immediately the Baroness came up stairs with her daughter. 'I am overcome,' cried she, throwing herself into her arm-chair; 'M'lle Boinet, quick, quick, give me my smelling salts; I have laughed so much that I am suffocated.'

"'Then the reception was very pleasant?' cried I.

"'Wait, wait: you shall hear,' replied she, overcome with a accession of gayety. 'Figure to yourself the abbat and his *cortége* awaiting us in the greenroom, hats off, and with a respectful countenance, as was very proper; when my daughter came forward, this great fellow went down on one knee in the most gallant manner imaginable, to receive the scarf, which she tied crosswise, while the others applauded with a frightful noise. At last silence was restored. Then the abbat rose, and delivered a little address to me, during which I looked at him: that man is a giant; I do believe the top of my plumes would only reach his elbow. When he had concluded his harangue I turned to the Baron, who gave me his hand; and I said to him in a loud voice: Baron, I pray you tender my acknowledgments to this young man; not knowing the Provencial, I have not understood his discourse; but I am not the less charmed with his sentiments.'

"'But, madame, he spoke to you in French, cried the Baron. At this explanation I was overcome with laughter, and a quarter of an

hour trying to recover myself behind my fan. So far everything has gone on very well; wine flowed liberally, and ratafia for these worthy men. They drank our health innumerable times, and, as far as I can judge, retired feeling very happy.'

"The Baron entered an instant after.

"'There is any number of people below on the road,' said he to his wife, 'all of whom seem inclined to come up here, but they certainly shall not enter, and we can at least sleep quietly to-night; I have just had the drawbridge raised.'

"'Here we are all prisoners,' replied the Baroness jokingly: 'no one can come in or go out without your permission.'

"We passed immediately to the table. Marie de Malepire's countenance was both animated and absent-minded: she took part in the conversation with unusual vivacity, which struck me. I had never seen her so before; and I observed, with a secret uneasiness, the effort which she made to appear natural and tranquil.

Immediately after supper she retired, owing to

the fatigues of the day. The Baron dozed in the corner of the sofa, and I commenced with the Baroness one of those games of cards which she so willingly prolonged until midnight.

"At about eleven o'clock, Boinet entered, looking very much frightened.

"'I do not know what is going on,' said she: 'there is a great tumult outside. Here, you hear nothing of it; but, if Monsieur the Baron would go down to the courtyard, perhaps he could discover the cause of all this noise.'

"'It is perhaps a serenade that they are giving us,' said the Baroness, tranquilly mixing the cards.

"'I will go and see,' cried the Baron, rising with a start: 'Remain here, Champaubert; there is no necessity for interrupting your game.'

"He had hardly left us, when we heard the great church clock sounding with all its force.

"'It is the tocsin,' cried I.

"'There must be a fire somewhere,' replied the Baroness: 'such misfortunes are frequent here; the houses being built of wood, and

thatched with straw. On days of public rejoicing, there is almost always some incendiary termination, because each one makes a great fire on his hearth in order to regale his friends with fritters fried in nut oil.'

"'In such a case, we should be able to see the flames here,' said I, rising to look out of the window.

"The most profound obscurity covered the heavens and the earth; the atmosphere was hazy; one would have thought that a storm was brewing on these elevated plateaux. It was impossible to distinguish the situation of the village otherwise than by the lugubrious sounds which proceeded from it; and one could distinguish nothing, through the opaque shadows of the night, but a multitude of luminous points which moved in the same direction. These were the resinous torches carried by the peasants; and evidently a large number were coming towards the castle. I was observing all these things with a certain anxiety, when the Baron returned hurriedly to the drawing-room. He

had one of those heavy guns in his hand, such as were formerly used in the sieges.

"'It is a sedition, and attack of armed men,' said he to us, with a *sang-froid* mingled with rage. 'There are perhaps four or five hundred shouting and yelling on the edge of the moat, and opposite the door.'

"'What do they want?' exclaimed the Baroness, without very much emotion.

"'Who knows?' replied the Baron. 'Choiset appeared at the grating to speak to them; but they only cried the more furiously. Instead of expressing their griefs, if they have any, they continued to cry: "The abbat! the abbat!" as though we had him here a prisoner. Some of them have guns; but the greater part are unarmed, except with pickaxes and socks of ploughshares. There is not much danger of their taking us with these means of assault. I fear but one thing, and that is, that they have the idea of entering on this side, by the postern.'

"'But is the thing possible?' asked the Baroness, commencing to feel uneasy.

"He nodded affirmatively, and cried with an imprecation:

"'I myself will defend this passage. The first who shows himself I will shoot down as I would a dog, and all in the same manner one after another, as they come.'

"'Ah! mon Dieu! mon Dieu!' exclaimed the Baroness, raising her hands to heaven. 'And my daughter!'

"'You will go and bring her here,' replied the Baron. 'It is from the balcony of her room that I am going to observe the approach to the postern.'

"'Can I do nothing?' I asked him.

"'Come with me,' replied he briefly.

"The Baroness took a light; we followed her into the little studio which preceded her daughter's room.

"'She has been asleep a long time, and her door is closed,' said she, drawing a key from her pocket. 'But here is my pass-key; I often enter her room in this manner, to look at her as she sleeps.'

"She passed into the corridor; at the same instant a gust of air made the candle flicker, which she had just put on the table, and shook the window-curtain.

"'Who has opened this passage?' cried the Baron, turning round astonished, and looking at one of the panels in the wainscoting which was partly raised. 'It is a secret passage which has been closed for years.'

"'Does it lead to the parterre?' asked I, connecting the incident with the fact which had so startled me.

"The Baroness had just opened her daughter's room; she entered, and uttered a loud cry. There was a man in her daughter's room, and that man was the abbat!!!

"Marie de Malepire stood with her arms extended, as if wishing to form a rampart to shield this giant, who stood immovable, like one petrified, in the middle of the room.

"'Save yourself! Save yourself!' cried she, pointing to the door with an energetic gesture.

"I threw myself forward to bar the passage.

At the same time the Baron fired his gun; the ball passed through the abbat's hair, and struck the frame of the mirror there at the top, where you see that indentation."

CHAPTER V.

"I HAVE always thought that 'twas some projectile that had done all that damage," murmured Dom Gérusac, tapping his snuff-box.

"'Twas she whom her father should have killed," said I, transported with a secret fury.

"All I have just related to you was accomplished in less than a minute," continued M. de Champaubert. "The abbat had the presence of mind to throw himself into the passage; he passed literally over our bodies, and escaped. I rose up, seized with a vertigo. I was like a man who had rolled down a precipice, and whose faculties are momentarily suspended. In truth, I do not know how I can recall the scene of which I was then a mute witness. When the abbat had disappeared, there was a brief silence. The Baroness had dropped into a seat, and was hiding her face in her handkerchief; Marie de Male-

pire leaned one hand against the mantel-piece; she was very pale, but she neither lowered her head nor her gaze.

"'Did this man enter here without your knowledge?' asked the Baron, at last, in a hoarse voice.

"'No, sir,' replied she intrepidly: 'the moment to avow all has arrived,—to declare all the sentiments of my heart; I will do it courageously.'

"Her audacity wavered, however; and it was in a less assured tone, and with an involuntary lowering of her glance, that she added:

"'I have given my heart and my love to a man who, in the eyes of the world, is not my equal.'

"'This peasant,—you love him?' interrogated the Baron violently.

"'Yes,' replied she; 'and nothing can separate us. We are united,—he is my lover; I am his.'

"''Tis false! 'Tis false! Do not believe it!' cried the Baroness, suddenly coming out of her stupor, and throwing herself between the father and daughter; 'this is a moment of delirium, of

folly. Can what she has declared be possible? how can it have happened? when could she have been seduced? It cannot be true; she has lied; she does not even know this man.'

"'I have said the truth,' said M'lle de Malepire, raising her eyes to heaven with a strange burst of enthusiasm and passion: 'I love this young man because he possesses all the virtues of his humble condition,—simplicity, honesty, morality. Yes, I love him,' continued she excitedly; 'poverty, with him, is not appalling to me. His robust arms are accustomed to work. I shall partake of the bread which he gains laboriously. When I caused him to enter here this evening, it was to tell him that I had resolved to fly with him this very night. It is because you would force me to marry against my will, that I have had recourse to such an extremity. It was to prevent so frightful a misfortune that I put myself under his protection.'

"'She is mad; my poor child is mad,' cried the Baroness, with the wildness of despair.

"The Baron turned towards me and said, with

a composure more frightful than the most violent burst of rage:

"'I will kill the wretch.'

"'And who would honor me?' cried Marie de Malepire, with a savage energy; 'who would make of a guilty girl an honest woman?'

"The old noble raised his hand as if to strike her face, and brand it forever; but he did not touch it.

"'Go, he may marry you; tell him so; go, follow him. You are no longer my daughter: I renounce you. Cursed be the day that you were born; cursed be the hour that God raised you from the dead; cursed be the life that awaits you here and hereafter!'

"'You will pardon me one day,' murmured Marie de Malepire, bowing her head.

"These were the last words I ever heard her speak. The Baron extended his hand towards me as if for support. 'Come,' said he to me. Before leaving, I turned my eyes towards her. It was the last time I ever saw her.

"What a night! All within me was crushed,

and I found a morbid consolation in bleeding my mortally wounded heart. I exaggerated to myself, if possible, the contempt with which M'lle de Malepire had repaid my tenderness, and the senseless passion to which she had just sacrificed all. In the excess of my indignation and despair, my vengeance would have perhaps exceeded that of her father, had it been mine to decide her destiny. Perhaps I should now have a crime with which to reproach myself; my love was too great not to be implacable.

"The Baron had followed me into my room; his grief was dark and silent; he walked mechanically up and down, and sometimes approached the window, as if to take breath. There was no longer any noise to be heard; outside, evidently some unexpected circumstance had quelled the popular tumult, and the peasantry no longer besieged the castle door.

"About midnight, Choiset entered with a countenance expressive of consternation. 'May Monsieur pardon this liberty,' said he, hesitating: "I came to tell you that Madame the Baroness

is very ill; we have just taken her up like one dead; she has just now begun to return to consciousness, and has gone to her room.'

"'Alone?' asked the Baron.

"'With M'lle Boinet,' replied the old gamekeeper in an altered voice; and, turning his head away, left the room.

"We went down stairs. On perceiving us the Baroness came, and threw herself before her husband, sobbing convulsively.

"'She has gone; I could not retain her,' cried she; 'but I shall not thus abandon her. Husband, you will have compassion on the poor misled girl; you will permit me to follow her; it is my duty; I must snatch her from that miserable ravisher; the moment will come when she will be horrified at her fault; then I will bring her back; I will hide her in the depths of some convent; I will shut myself in with her. Religion teaches us to be merciful; according to its holy teachings, the greatest crimes have been wiped out by a long repentance.'

"'Repentance effaces a crime before God, but

the dishonor remains before the world. We are of a blood and rank which cannot forget it.'

"The poor lady continued to entreat with a vehement grief, and in accents which made me shudder, because they so well expressed the agony of my own heart. The Baron was inflexible.

"'Nothing can wipe out our shame, nor exempt us from this outrage,' said he; 'now the wretched girl must marry her lover.'

"Thus passed the remainder of the night; and daybreak found us all three still in the same place, pale, bowed down, and annihilated, as it were. Was it that passion had already consumed the strength of my being, or that, during these last and terrible scenes, I had most suffered, I fell suddenly into a state of physical debility, which greatly alarmed those who surrounded me. The malady increased with frightful rapidity, and by the next day I was in danger of death. I have but a confused recollection of what then passed around me. I only know, that, during the hallucinations of the fever, I imagined

myself a young child who was dead. It appeared to me that I had been put into a coffin, and was being carried to the tomb, and that funeral chants were sung, then the mournful procession stopped at Malepire's Pass, and that then, leaving my shroud, I saw the brightness of heaven. These scenes of my death and resurrection were renewed without ceasing in my troubled imagination, and I passed alternately from a complete prostration to a vehement agitation. At last life triumphed. The crisis was past. A day came when I no longer closed my eyes; and I arose, like Lazarus, and my feeble vision rested on a woman seated at my bedside. It was the Baroness, but I did not recognize her at first because she wore neither rouge or patches. The Baron was there also; both had watched at my bedside night and day, and it was to their cares that I owed my life. My illness had lasted six weeks; and several times the physician, whom they had brought from D——, had declared that I would not live till the next day. This physician was a sagacious and observant little old

man. He had not mistaken the cause of my malady; and, as soon as I commenced to recover my memory and a sense of my situation, he said before me to the Baroness:

"'The air of these mountains is too strong for a convalescent; nor must we forget that the winter season lasts here eight months of the year, and that very soon the snow will have rendered the roads impassable. My opinion is that M. de Champaubert had better hasten his departure, despite his weak state, and I engage he will endure the journey; if he cannot go on horseback well, we will carry him in a litter.'

"I was agitated by a feeble trembling: the effort which I had just made to rise had exceeded my strength, and my ideas again commenced to be confused.

"'Yes, doctor,' murmured I: 'you will accompany me; we will repose on the snow at the Pass of Malepire; they will leave me there.'

"'No, no: you will go on further,' interrupted the doctor; 'you will go home to your father, who is waiting for you.'

"'My father,' said I, softened at this remembrance: 'does he know that I am ill? has he heard of it?' Madame de Malepire looked uneasily at the doctor, as if hesitating to answer me.

"'Tell him all, madame,' cried the latter: 'speak to him of the letter which the Baron has received.'

"'A few lines only,' said she, leaning towards me. 'It is your father who has written; he is in good health and safety, thank heaven! but horrible things have happened him.'

"The Baron entered at this moment, and it was he who recounted to me the fatal days of the 5th and 6th of October. My father had taken part in all those events: after having accompanied the royal family to Paris, and ran great dangers in so doing, he had returned home for a few hours, and by the next day exiled himself voluntarily, having emigrated. It was at Turin that I was to find him.

"The physician had hoped that this fatal news would divert me from the fixed idea which was

killing me. In fact, the shock which my mind had just received turned my thoughts from my own sufferings, and gave me a sudden energy. I arose, and leaned my elbow on my pillow, that I might better hear the reading of the public papers which the Baron had received at the same time with my father's letter. The relating of horrible scenes, of which he gave all the details, absorbed my entire attention. For a quarter of an hour I forgot where I was, and what grief had made of me. I forgot Marie de Malepire ; but, before the Baron had concluded his reading, my eyes fell unfortunately upon a little green sprig which was growing on the window-sill. It was a sprig of geranium that Marie de Malepire had put one afternoon in her corsage, and of which I had taken possession when she had thrown it, all withered and broken, in a corner of the drawing-room. This diminutive twig had taken root ; and its little leaves, of a tender green, had commenced to sprout from the vase where I had put it, like a precious plant. At this sight, my burning head dropped upon

the pillow, and I fell into a bitter reverie. The Baron continued to read; but it was not what I heard which kindled in my veins a fever of indignation and grief.

"The doctor perceived this sudden relapse. 'Come, sir,' said he to me abruptly: 'you must leave to-morrow.'

"The same evening the Baroness was alone at my bedside. I know not with what expression I then looked at her, as I thought of one whom I never more wished to name; but the poor mother burst into tears, and said to me, in a low voice,—

"'I weep for her as one dead.'

"There was no farther explanation between us. The wound which my heart had received was so deep and so acute, that I was fearful of awakening in myself new griefs by touching it. It appeared to me that there were things which I could not hear mentioned without dying.

"About midnight the Baron and his wife retired, after having affectionately pressed my hand. M'lle Boinet came to me, and bid me good-

night, with a sad expression which was not usual with her.

"'To-morrow,' said I mechanically to her. She put her handkerchief to her eyes, and went out without making any reply.

"I remained alone with the servant who sat with me that night. Until then the Baron had slept in my room, not being willing to trust any one else with the care which my situation required. The good, rough girl had installed herself near my bed, her hands crossed over her neck-handkerchief; and, as if she perceived that I was not asleep, she commenced, in her *patois*, a species of unintelligible monologue. It appeared to me that she was deploring my approaching departure, and that of her master and mistress. This nasal humming ended by lulling me to sleep. My tired and burning eyes closed; and, for the first time in a long while, I slept several hours in succession a profound slumber.

"When I awoke it was bright daylight, and the joyous rays of the rising sun penetrated all parts of my room, of which the door and window were

wide open. Already the doctor was near my bed.

"'Come, come!' said he gayly to me, 'you are much better; we must profit by this splendid day, and take our departure in an hour.'

"I permitted myself to be dressed like a child, and, taking the doctor's arm, tried to take several steps; but so weak was I, that I could not even get as far as the door.

"'Do not allow yourself to be discouraged,' said he to me, conducting me to a *fauteuil*. 'I have prepared you a good litter, trimmed with curtains; once there, and you will do marvellously. It is at the foot of the stairs; if you cannot walk so far, you can be carried there.'

"'I should first prefer to go and take leave of the Baron and Baroness,' said I to him, with dolorous emotion.

"'They have spared you these painful adieux: it would have been an additional pain and grief which you are hardly in a state to support. For several days all has been ready for their departure. They were waiting only until you should

be out of danger, and last night they left the castle.'

"'For how long?' inquired I, trembling at this news.

"'Forever, perhaps,' replied the physician sorrowfully. 'They will emigrate.'

"They laid me almost fainting in the litter; and I let myself be carried like an inert thing, without asking where they were taking me, and without casting a single look behind. The doctor accompanied me on horseback. When we had gone as far as Malepire's Pass, he alighted, and came and opened the curtains of my litter. The fresh air had revived me. I raised my head, and glanced at the melancholy landscape before me. The shadow of the rocks had already lengthened as far as the border of the gorge, and the yellow leaves fell along the road. A bird hopped upon the stone where had once rested the coffin of Marie de Malepire, and its little joyous cry mingled with the hollow rumbling of the waters. At this sight I hid my face in my handkerchief with a moan.

"The doctor leaned over to me. 'How do you find yourself?' inquired he uneasily.

"I pressed his hand, which sought mine, and motioned him to close the curtain. The sight of these places gave me a vertigo; a horrible temptation seized my brain; I felt an irresistible desire to throw myself into this abyss, and rest forever under the cold waters of the torrent. This delirium ceased, when, arriving on the sloping side of the mountain, I felt on my face the warm southerly air which was grateful to my benumbed limbs. It was thus that I left the places where I had experienced, in a few days, all that the human heart can suffer.

"Eight days later I arrived at Turin, where I again met my father. The physician had accompanied me thus far, but he had to return immediately to his little town. This separation afflicted me much: I had become attached to him as to an old friend, whose science and discreet penetration had efficaciously succored me, and to which I owed my recovery. Another *bizarre* motive, which I would hardly confess to

myself, made me also regret his presence. He knew one who had left in my heart an imperishable *souvenir*, and he could have spoken to me of her. At the moment when he was about to leave us, I had a cowardly return of passion and woful tenderness; and I said to him in a stifled voice, as I took him aside, 'Who knows what has become of the unfortunate girl? Inform yourself of her situation, I beseech you; perhaps she has repented, and left this man; her relations have renounced and abandoned her; there is no one to assist her even should she now be horrified at her fault; this idea puts me in despair; I would shed my blood to save her, to snatch her from that wretch.'

"The physician looked at me with an air of commiseration, and said laconically: "Take my advice, and forget her; why should her happiness or unhappiness concern you? she has chosen her lot.'

My father did not question me, and I said nothing to him; we tacitly avoided all allusion to the fatal project of alliance which had taken

me to the Baron's home, and everything concerning my sojourn at the Chateau of Malepire.

"Once, however, my father broke this silence. It was near the end of '92, and we had just arrived at Ostend. There was then in that town a large number of emigrants, who were preparing, like myself, to pass over to England; but I did not wish to meet them, and, whilst my father went to look up some old friends, I remained alone at the inn. I remember night was approaching, and that, seized with an inexpressible melancholy, I looked through the window of my room at the snow which was falling silently, and accumulating on the roofs of the neighboring houses whose high gables formed great black indentations on the sky of pale gray. My father entered with a sorrowful countenance, and seated himself near the fire without speaking. I approached him anxiously. At that time one lived in continual apprehension, and formed conjectures which the event always exceeded.

"'Are there any news from France?' I asked tremblingly.

"My father made a negative gesture, and said to me in a changed voice: 'I have just learned the death of one of my old friends. You knew him, my son; and, though your relations terminated in grievous circumstances, I think you will be afflicted by this event.'

"'The Baron of Malepire is dead!' I cried.

"'He had a sudden loss of property a short time ago, and for some months he has lived here in a state of destitution.'

"'And the Baroness?' I asked: 'have you seen her?'

"He shook his head like one heartbroken.

"'Dead also?' I cried.

"'She succumbed much sooner: it was grief that killed her,' said my father in a hollow voice. 'The Baron had no one with him during his last moments, no one but a poor girl who had been his wife's maid, and who latterly had been obliged to work to keep them alive. I sought her when I heard this, hoping that I could give her some assistance; but she had gone back to France.'

"Then followed a long silence. At last I said to my father:

"'M'lle de Malepire,—do they know what has become of her?'

"He hesitated a moment; then he said, with a profound accent, 'The family of Malepire is extinct now.'

"Since that day I have not pronounced the name of Marie de Malepire; my father must have thought I had forgotten her. Meanwhile this *souvenir* has lived in me throughout all the years of my youth; and, though I hardly dare say it, in my riper years it has been an obstacle to other engagements. To-day, even, it was not without a pang that I found myself opposite this portrait. Yes: at that sight my old heart trembled as in 'the days that are no more.' Alas! it is the most beautiful and the most lamentable page in my life which has been reopened before me."

CHAPTER VI.

THE Marquis leaned his elbow on the table, sighing, and poured himself a glass of Spanish wine, which he drank at a single draught.

"Really, you were very unfortunate in your first inclination," cried Dom Gérusac, who had listened to all this metaphysical love in a state of mystification.

As for myself, my heart was inflated with a jealous indignation. I did not take my eyes off the portrait; and, when the Marquis had ceased speaking, I murmured with despiteful rage:

"This 'abbat,' whom she loved so much, must now be a frightfully wrinkled and crooked old peasant. I'd like to see him now."

During M. de Champaubert's recital, Babelou had two or three times partly opened the door. When he had concluded, she glided behind my uncle's chair, and spoke to him in a low voice.

It was to tell him that the curé had come to ask a night's lodging, as he had frequently done before.

"Tell him he is very welcome," cried Dom Gérusac rising: "where is he, pray?"

"In the kitchen," replied Babelou; "he is drying his cassock, which is drenched, for it is raining hard."

And the rain did rattle against the windows, and the temperature was sensibly colder than it had been.

"Make a wood-fire on the hearth; we are all shivering," replied Dom Gérusac; "then you will make us some more coffee, and remember that the curé likes it very hot. My dear Maximian," he added, turning to Champaubert, "you will let me introduce you to the Abbé Lambert, —a most worthy man, who has officiated for fifteen years as the curate of Malepire."

"I will see him with pleasure," replied the Marquis quickly; and, whilst my uncle went to receive his new guest, he added, addressing me:

"The curé cannot be entirely ignorant as to the manner in which the Malepires have disappeared from the world; he must have heard the misfortunes of their house spoken of; have you never questioned him?"

"Frequently, my lord," I replied, coloring; "but he appeared to know nothing on the subject; perhaps it was charitably done to put in oblivion the dishonor of M'lle de Malepire."

The Abbé Lambert entered, conducted by my uncle. His old cassock was still very damp, and the tracks which his coarse shoes left on the floor testified to the length of the journey which he had just made on foot, over roads covered with clayish mud; but he was not disconcerted in the least by his poor costume, and it was without either embarrassment or boldness that he saluted the grand personage seated at our hearth. The latter overwhelmed the poor country curate with the attentions which he might have bestowed upon a prince. He gave him a seat beside himself; and with his own hands stirred the logs, that he might better dry his threadbare cassock.

"My dear pastor, I thank Heaven, who has scattered your flock as far as this valley," said Dom Gérusac jocosely: "we should not have had the pleasure of your society this evening, had you not come this way for some one of your sheep."

"That is true," replied he with an expression of sadness which struck me. "I was called for something concerning my ministry. The case was pressing, and there was danger of my arriving too late. It is a long distance from Malepire here, and in stormy weather one meets at every step torrents which make the roads almost impassable.

When the Abbé Lambert had dried his clothes and taken a cup of coffee, the Marquis commenced to interrogate as to how long he had been in that part of the country, and on the *souvenirs* which he collected concerning the ancient lords. One would have said that the Abbé Lambert penetrated the interest which characterized M. de Champaubert's investigations; for he went somewhat beyond his direct questions, and re-

plied, with sad gravity, "When first I came here, nearly sixteen years ago, the family of Malepire was almost forgotten; the people had even ceased to speak of the deplorable event which tainted the honor of that house."

"Still you were acquainted with the fact," cried the Marquis. "You have heard of the only daughter of the Baron of Malepire,—of M'lle de Malepire."

The good priest raised his eyes and his hands to heaven: "May God have mercy on her you have just named!" said he in a fervent tone. "Pardon her also for the outrage of which she was guilty towards you: she has expiated it by great sufferings."

"You know her? you know where she ended her miserable life?" interrupted the Marquis in an agitated manner.

"It is a sad history," murmured the Abbé Lambert shaking his head, as if he suddenly hesitated to recall this remembrance; but the Marquis insisted, and then he said, "I little thought I should relate here, and in such company, the

life of that sinful girl. God, whose wisdom is infinite, has brought about this meeting."

And, after having collected himself an instant, he went on: "At the time when M'lle de Malepire fled from her father's castle, I served the curacy of St. C——, a little village of the lower Provence, in the diocese of Aix. It was in that place that the family of François Pinatel lived; he whom they surnamed the 'abbat,' because, in all the patronal fêtes, he was the chief of the youth. These Pinatels were peasants of old stock, who cultivated a small farm which they had inherited from father to son for two or three hundred years. The mother, a worthy woman and a good housekeeper, hard-working, greedy of gain, governed the house. She had already married her eldest son, and lived peaceably with her daughter-in-law, who had brought as dower a piece of land worth a thousand crowns. One day the good woman brought me a letter addressed to herself. No one at her house knew a single letter of the alphabet, and she came to ask me to read it to her. This letter announced to

her that her second son, François Pinatel, had married M'lle de Malepire.

"She became his wife," cried the Marquis indignantly. "This was the reason that the Baroness said to me that she wept her daughter as one dead." Then he continued: "Go on, I pray you, M. Curé."

"Yes: it was even so," replied the curé with a sigh. "And pity 'tis 'twas so, for her happiness as well as for that of the young man. The marriage had taken place with the written consent of the Baron, notwithstanding the absence of other formalities. It had been hastily done to prevent scandal, or rather to stop it. The newly married couple had set out immediately for St. C——.

"The widow Pinatel was in nowise dazzled by this alliance. With her blunt good sense, and her peasant shrewdness, she divined immediately under what circumstances her son had been able to obtain the hand of a 'noble' girl and a rich heiress; and she fully appreciated the probable consequences of this union. She begged me to

read her the letter a second time ; then she said to me with a thoughtful air, 'All that glitters is not gold. It is clear that the parents have not willingly given their consent, and that they never wish to see their daughter again, since her husband brings her to me. There is no talk of giving her a dower, as far as I can see ; and all these submissions will not perhaps prevent her from being disinherited. At any rate, it is a marriage which does not suit us. What are we to do at the house with this fine lady ? She need not suppose that we are all there to wait on her ; and, then, what a figure she will cut among us with her fashionable dresses ! The villagers will make fun of her, and I shall not even dare to send her to the fountain. What else is that they say in the letter ?—that she is an extraordinary beauty ? It must have been a wise man that wrote that passage, for I don't quite understand it.'

"The schoolmaster to whom François Pinatel had applied to write this letter had a smattering of profane authors, and this poor pedant com-

pared M'lle de Malepire to Venus. This figurative expression so alarmed the widow Pinatel, that I had some trouble to make her understand that it was merely his way of speaking. 'No matter,' cried she, in a corollary manner: 'the eldest will not be satisfied with his brother's marriage. He will find fault because he did not ask my consent.'

"Evidently this last grief was the most considerable in her eyes. She regarded it as an unpardonable offense, and one must admit that in point of human propriety her susceptibility was just and natural. I tried my best to make her regard her son's marriage in another light, and to awaken in her heart the Christian sentiments which command her to love the stranger which Providence sent into her family; but this woman, though good according to the world's standard, had no one of the natural virtues of religion, and my words did not touch her.

"In the meantime, I was called by my lord of Aix to a work commenced the preceding year, and which his highness wished me to finish un-

der his direct supervision. My absence lasted two months, and it was near the feasts of Christmas when I returned to my parish. I arrived about dusk, having gone a part of the way on foot; and, as a drizzling rain had commenced falling, I directed my steps towards the Pinatels' house, which stood on the edge of the road, at a quarter of a mile from the village. This lodge was a great building whose walls had never been plastered, and which, properly speaking, had neither front or side. The windows were cut hap-hazard, and had neither panes or shutters; and the entrance door faced a sort of court cluttered with rubbish and heaps of brushwood and logs of firewood. Not a tree was there before the house, not a square of garden anywhere to be seen. In summer a scorching sun blistered the roof, and transformed the interior of the house into a furnace; and in winter the freezing northwest wind whistled freely between the old rotten planks. It was very dark, and I crossed the court sounding the ground with my stick, when I heard some one before me who cried: 'François, 'tis you at

last.' I approached, announcing myself, when the person who had spoken turned abruptly towards the house, and disappeared in the obscurity without making any reply. I pushed the door, which was partly open; and, after having crossed the stable, I entered the room where the family was usually to be found. It was quite a large room, but so dark and smoky that I could not at first be recognized. The bed of the mother Pinatel was in one corner of the room hidden under curtains of yellow serge. A great wardrobe of nutwood, which was always locked, stood opposite two or three shelves where were some dishes and cooking utensils. The pewter plates won by the abbat decorated the wall, where hung also a portion of the provisions for housekeeping.

"Just then all the family were seated around the table, on which there was a large dish of corn which they were picking with great care, to take out the blighted grains which spoil the bread. The operation was being accomplished by the light of a lamp, and they applied themselves dili-

gently to this work like so many ants; when I appeared, the widow jumped up crying:

"'Excuse me, M. Curé: you have crossed the stable without a light. It was because the door was open.'

"'There was some one in the court,—your new daughter-in-law; I think she was expecting her husband.'

"The mother Pinatel shrugged her shoulders, and the eldest son said, between his teeth:

"'In that case she will pass the night outside.'

"'Is Francois on the mountain?' I asked, thinking that perhaps he had returned to Malepire, where great depredations had been committed after the Baron's departure. It was even said that the peasants pillaged the castle, and burned part of the battlements.

"'What would he be doing up there?' replied the widow Pinatel. 'He has taken a different road. 'What do you want M. Curé? He is a boy who does not willingly stay at home. He has gone to amuse himself a little at the fair at Apt.'

"I placed myself in the seat of honor, under the chimney-piece; there was a small fire there, produced by two sticks which burned end to end; and, although it was past the supper-hour, an enormous kettle still boiled in the cinders. The politeness of Provencial peasants consists in taking all the brunt of the conversation, so that their guest never has the trouble of answering them.

"The eldest son resumed the conversation, and commenced to discourse on the drought which had interfered with the crops, and of the extraordinary size of two fat hogs which he had sold at the last fair of St. C——. Whilst he was giving the most minute details on that subject, his young sister-in-law noiselessly entered the room, and seated herself on the other side of the fireplace. She was soaked by the rain, and shivering with cold.

"'Daughter-in-law, never do you leave the door open again when you go out in the evening,' said the widow Pinatel sourly.

"'How shall I see to come in, if I shut it behind me?' she replied irritably.'

"They paid no attention to her; the eldest son continued to talk of his crops, and of the sale of his hogs. The other brothers Pinatel spoke in their turn, and began a discussion between themselves on the size and weight of the two animals. During this colloquy, I looked at the young wife with curiosity and compassion. She was dressed, like the mother Pinatel, in a skirt of brown stuff; and a muslin cap covered her hair completely. The whiteness of her complexion was so great and so equal, that one would have said that her face was marble. She stirred the fire whilst shivering in her damp clothes, and drooping her head as if she was afraid I would speak to her. Seeing this, I said nothing to her, and even avoided looking at her; but I threw in the fire several logs which I found near me, and pushed the boiling pot a little aside that she might better warm her feet. When she had warmed herself, she crossed her arms and leaned against the wall, and closed her eyes like one who sleeps, overcome with fatigue. The rain continued to fall, and I staid quite late in the

evening. During all this time, the young wife did not once move, nor did she once open her eyes. As I was about to leave, thinking that the rain would last all night, a shuffling was heard in the court, and the house-dog ran to the door wagging his tail.

"'Tis he,' cried the young wife, starting up, and precipitating herself before her husband.

"The others remained seated at the table, and the mother-in-law murmured, casting a glance at the place which her daughter-in-law had just left:

"'All very well, if she has kept the soup warm.'

"An instant after, the abbat entered, and said with a jovial air, as he threw his stick and his coarse mantle of serge in the corner:

"'Good evening to all; Monsieur le Curé, how do you do? And you, mother; does everything go well with you?'

"'We must always say yes,' replied she; 'and you, my son, how are you?'

"'Not so bad that I shall not soon be better,'

exclaimed he, with a coarse laugh, as he passed his hand across his stomach.

"'You have had no supper,' cried the widow Pinatel; 'then put yourself there.'

"She bustled about to prepare a place for her son at the table, and added, turning towards the young wife:

"'Daughter-in-law, serve your husband.'

"The latter obeyed, and went to get a large loaf of brown bread, which she put before the abbat with a porringer full of vegetable soup. Unfortunately this soup was cold, which fact put the abbat in a bad humor and the mother Pinatel in a rage.

"'Jesus Dieu! what were you doing there?' said she to the young wife. 'It is enough to make any one laugh to see a person of your age who does not even know how to boil the pot over the fire; fortunately every one in the house is not like you,' she added, after having looked affectionately at the daughter-in-law of her choice; 'whenever my eldest son comes home, he always finds his wife at work, and something

cooking for his supper in the chimney corner. Take pattern by your sister-in-law if you want to be a good housekeeper.'

"'If François does not complain, you have no occasion to scold me,' she replied arrogantly.

"I hastened to interfere, and to declare that it was my fault only if the abbat eat his soup cold, as I had taken upon myself to move the vessel in which the soup had been warming.

"'François will excuse me,' I added; 'another time I will be more thoughtful.'

"'Certainly there is no need of any one being angry about it,' said he then to the two women. 'The soup is not bad, by any means; let us say no more about it. Do you know that the fair did not succeed as well as usual? There were neither merchants nor buyers, nor any one who had six francs in their pockets. A good deal of snow has fallen on the Tuberon; and I was obliged to return by the roads, where even the dogs would not pass; I was up to my ankles in mud, and my feet are like icicles.'

"'Put some hot ashes in your shoes quickly,'

interrupted the mother Pinatel, with much solicitude. 'There is nothing like it for driving out cold.'

"'Here, wife,' said the abbat, taking off his great iron-nailed shoes, the leather of which had entirely disappeared under a coat of congealed mud, 'here, fix those for me.'

"She wiped off the mud, without uttering a word, put into the shoes a shovelful of embers, and took them back to her husband.

"On seeing her so degraded and so cruelly punished for her fault, I thought she would certainly throw herself into the arms of religion, which alone could sustain and fortify her in the long trials which awaited her, and went on convincing myself that hers was a soul won over to God. However, on Sunday she did not appear in church; and on Christmas she did not fulfil her religious duties. Although the Pinatels were certainly not fervent Christians, the women regularly attended the church services. I asked the widow Pinatel why I did not see her daughter-in-law with her, and what she was doing at home.

"'Nothing, as usual,' was the woman's answer. 'She is in the chimney corner with her arms crossed, her feet in the ashes; and, if her dress took fire, I believe, God forgive me! she would not raise her hand to put it out.'

"It was my custom to visit the families of my parish once or twice a month, according to their need of spiritual help; and, unless in extraordinary cases, I did not depart from this rule. I therefore waited fifteen days before returning to the Pinatels'. This time I found the young wife alone. She was seated in the sun before the door, with her peasant's hat drooped over her eyes, so that she did not perceive my approach until I was within two or three steps of her. It seemed to me that my presence was not altogether an agreeable surprise; she arose abruptly, and said in Provencial:

"'There is no one in the house; they have all been in the fields since morning.'

"'If it does not incommode you, I will rest here a few minutes,' I replied in French.

"Apparently she had supposed that I did not

know her origin ; for she blushed slightly, and seemed astonished that I did not speak to her in Provencial as to the Pinatel family ; nevertheless she soon recovered her assurance, and also answered me in French, with an air and accent suited to her mother's drawing-room.

"'Will you do me the honor, sir, to enter the house ?'

"I thanked her, and we remained outside seated on a bench against the wall. The weather was admirably serene. The sparrows hopped joyously in the brushwood, and the little white queen-margarets commenced to open along the hedge.

"'What a beautiful day!' said I to the young wife : 'this clear and brilliant sun is like a glance of love from God to his creatures here below ; the most afflicted soul can rise, and console itself under the beneficence which rejoices all nature and life universally. Let us return thanks to God : praised be the Lord all powerful, who watches over us !'

"She made no reply, but looked at me with an air of hostility and scoffing, which irreligious

persons always affect towards the people of my calling who try to awaken in their souls faith and the recognition of the love of God. I have more than once experienced these marks of a disdainful aversion; but it was from men animated by philosophical intolerance, or else I have been exposed to the sarcasms of those braggarts of infidelity who glory in insulting those of my cloth. The malevolence of this young woman caused me painful astonishment. I nevertheless continued to discourse to her on the grandeur of religion, and the infinite consolations arising from the practice of Christian virtues. My words had not the effect which I had hoped. On the contrary, they awoke in her mind ideas of which I had not suspected her; and she commenced to argue and to dogmatize vehemently, exposing her doctrines, and trying to refute the principles and the creed taught by holy books. I was confounded to find, in so young a person, opinions so audacious and so vain,—so much of opinionativeness in doubt, and of passion in incredulity. Hers was an intellect

superbly logical, which was easily worked up; and her heart was sterile, and nothing could touch it. She was deficient in what the world calls sensibility and tenderness; but she had, in return, an ardent imagination filled with a false enthusiasm. I could understand, as I listened to her, by what errors she had been seduced, and by what allurements she had been dragged as low as I now saw her. I was young, then, and had not yet sounded all the abysses which surround and shut in the human conscience; and I was so frightened at the state of this poor soul, that I commenced praying fervently for her, and asking the Lord to dispel, by a miracle of his grace, so much misery and pride. As I was silent in imploring the divine mercy from the depths of my heart, the young woman thought that she had humiliated and reduced me to silence.

"'The discussion is closed,' said she to me almost gayly: 'let us speak of something else.'

"I could have given her some useful counsels touching her position; and I did not hesitate to say to her how she should act that she might ren-

der more easy and more pleasing her intercourse with her new relatives ; but she would not let me finish.

"'I do not know how to employ myself,' said she quietly to me. 'These people hate me, and I confess the sentiments are reciprocated. Nevertheless, we must mutually endure each other's society until the day that the widow Pinatel can count to her son the sum which he is to get from the paternal inheritance,—thirty louis, not more; but with that we can take a little farm, which we will cultivate. My husband has already set about it, and has found something which will suit us exactly; a property the owners of which have emigrated, and may not return in a long time. Unfortunately we must wait until next St. Michel, nearly another year ; but I will have patience.'

"The execution of this project seemed to me difficult, and I ventured several observations.

"'You are not accustomed to work,' said I to the young woman ; 'however great may be your courage and willingness, you will find it difficult to lead a life so laborious and rude. Besides

your husband cannot second you as well as you think perhaps. He has never worked hard, nor tilled the earth like his brothers. 'Emphatically speaking, he is lazy,' she interrupted unmoved. 'I know him to have that vice, and others also: he is a drunkard and a gambler. His mother is to blame for it: she has allowed him, since early youth, to go to market-places and fairs, where he associates only with horse-jockeys and gypsies, all vicious and debauched men. Even now she authorizes his frequent absence, and assists him in finding pretexts for keeping away from me. When we are alone in our own home he cannot so leave me. I shall well know how to keep him at home; he will no longer frequent the alehouse; he will lead the laborious and tranquil life to which man is destined on this earth; he will fulfil at last his duties as head of his family and a good citizen.'

"Christian charity kept me silent; but whoever knew François Pinatel knew also that he would never earn his living by tilling the earth, and that he was only capable of that exercise which

displayed his muscular force. He wanted also those qualities so essential to a peasant,—such as patience, a determination and sagacity somewhat defiant, and above all the spirit of economy. He was a man of limited ideas, of an easy and jovial disposition, but easily tempted, and one who did everything by impulse. His mother, whose favorite child he was, had well judged him; and she had been careful not to let him have his little part of the inheritance; and, whenever this favorite child returned home, he always found his piece of bread and his porringer of soup ready for him. I tried vainly to make the young wife understand the sort of tutelage of which her husband had need, and which she was incapable of exercising. I advised her to undertake nothing without the advice of her mother-in-law; and I went away grieved that I had not been able to enlighten her on the perilous condition of her immortal soul, nor even on that which concerned her temporal interests.

"Several days after, I left St. C——; my lord of Aix had designated me for other func-

tions, and Providence remitted to another pastor my spiritual family. It was about the commencement of the sinister days of the Revolution. The Church was divided by schism, and a persecution commenced against those who refused to adhere to the civil constitution of the clergy. For several months I surveyed the diocese with the mission of raising the courage of the feeble, and enlightening the irresolute. I finished my tour, and found myself at S——. It was then the latter part of September, and nearly a year since I had left my parish. S—— is a large market-town, only two miles from St. C——. I arrived the evening before the fair, which is one of the most considerable in the country, and where there is always a great influx. There is at the same time an auction, and a fête which lasts three days. The subjects for temptation and perdition are not wanting in such assemblies. They play and bet largely here, and the men who dupe them are the first to abandon them. On the morning of the next day, as I was going from the curial house, I met the abbat.

He was dressed in new clothes, and walked along with an air of importance towards the field where the fair was held. I stopped him to ask how his family were.

"'They were all well when I left home,' replied he; 'my mother is always the same,—as straight as a lance, and as brisk as a girl of fifteen. My wife is not poorly either; but she is getting thin.'

"'Did you come here alone?' I inquired.

"'My eldest brother was to have come with me; but he was prevented. I will tell you, M. Curé; I have considerable business on my hands. I have decided to take a farm,—three hundred acres of land; it will take a good many men to work such a piece of ground; I have already hired an ox-driver, a shepherd, and a ploughboy; now, I am going to buy a yoke of oxen, a horse, and a hundred sheep; and then I must not forget to put corn in the granary until the crops are harvested.'

"'All this will cost a great sum,' said I to him.

"He struck his leathern belt to make the

crowns which it contained ring, and answered me, as he lowered his voice:

"'I have there seven hundred livres which my mother gave me just as I was setting out on my route.'

"Here we separated. About an hour later, as I was crossing the green, I saw him enter a sort of eating-room, where met well-to-do farmers and rich jockeys, and nearly every one who came to the fair with money. I knew that gambling was done there, and even at great stakes; but I did not suspect that François Pinatel would try his fortune in such company, and I thought nothing of it, as he usually went with the young men; and I supposed, that, having finished his business, he had gone with them to wrestle a little, or to shoot at a target. In the afternoon I went and read my breviary in the shade of the olive-trees which were near the town, and the day was far advanced when I returned from my walk. At the corner of the green, I again met the abbat; he was without a hat, which with a peasant is a sign of great disorder of mind; and he walked

here and there without paying any attention to the passers whom he elbowed. On seeing me he came straight towards me, and said hurriedly :

"'Monsieur Curé, could you lend me a six-franc piece?'

"'I have but one little crown, which is at your service,' I replied ; 'but first tell me what has happened you?'

"And, taking his arm, I drew him far from the crowd, in an out-of-the-way place, where no one could hear us. He allowed himself to be led like a child, and at first made no reply to the important questions which I asked him ; but, suddenly coming out of his stupor, he confessed, with frightful imprecation and transports of grief, that he had played, and lost evey cent which he possessed.

"It was no time to represent to him the enormity of his crime, and to excite him to repentance. I tried to calm his despair ; but his was a violent nature, incapable of reasoning, and which he himself only could calm. Each moment he repeated : 'My mother! what will my mother

say? I had rather die than appear before her. I am not afraid of death; it would be short work to throw myself head first into a well.'

"I shuddered as I thought that he was capable of such a crime, and that, if left to himself, nothing would prevent him, neither the idea of God's justice nor the fear of eternal punishment. In the midst of these ravings he had moments of weakness, when he sat down, and, hiding his face in his hands, he cried and sobbed like a woman. I profited by one of these alternations to say to him, authoritatively:

"'Listen, my dear Pinatel: you have but one course to pursue; that is, to return immediately to St. C——, to throw yourself on your knees before your mother, and confess all to her.'

"'No, no,' cried he: 'I will never return home; I will go away where no one will ever hear of me again.'

"'Get up,' I continued; 'get up, and come; I will accompany you.'

"He refused more feebly, then he yielded, and we went on our way. As we walked, I showed

how he had hitherto failed in his duties to his God and his family, and told him by what conduct he could expiate his faults. He listened meekly ; but I had not, at that moment, the consolation of hearing one word of true repentance from his mouth. However, his head grew calmer little by little, and his natural carelessness and levity gained their sway. Before we were half way on our road, he recovered sufficient freedom of mind to relate to me in detail the catastrophy which he had just experienced.

"'I must tell you the whole truth,' said he with a sigh. 'I wanted a gold chain for my wife ; that was the cause of it all. A gold chain does not cost less than three louis. My eldest brother gave one to his wife when they were married. I was sorry that I could not give the same to my wife as a present. For, that you should know the truth, I must tell you that it was my mother who would not hear reason on the subject. It is not because she favors the eldest ; God keep me from the thought ! but she has her ideas. Three women in a house are like three nuts in a sack.

My brother's wife is jealous of mine because they call her in the village the beautiful peasant. On the other side, my wife is mortified when she sees her sister-in-law decked out on Sunday in ornaments and finery.'

"'I do not believe your wife pays any attention to all that,' interrupted I, in order to cut short this digression, which threatened to be lengthy.

"'Yes indeed, yes indeed,' replied he; 'so on my return I wanted to take her a gold chain; and, all debts paid, I had just enough money to buy the cattle and several sacks of corn. Then the idea came to me to risk six francs at play to try my luck. I entered coolly with the crown in my hand. I had resolved to lose only that. Nicholas Fidelier was banker. The louis d'or jingled before him. I played my six francs; and, unfortunately, I won. Then I put down three louis at a time, and lost. The pair of oxen was yet untouched. I again drew three louis, and again I lost. The blood mounted to my head, and I said to myself my luck would turn. I advanced six louis; I lost. The pair of oxen had

gone. Then I put a louis on the *ranganelle* to see. It was the banker's card which came out; I won.

"'Some one behind me said that that would bring me luck, and that the banker's luck had turned, because he had crossed his little finger with his thumb. This gave me good courage, and I played without counting. I lost again this time. There were seventeen louis left. I ought to have stopped. I had still a hundred crowns, with which I could buy the sheep and a little corn; but the idea that I had hired the ox-driver and the ploughboy prevented me. I played again, and lost all, even to my last farthing; and, unfortunately, I had borrowed from Jean Paul, one of our neighbors, six francs, which I still owed him. You did well not to give me your crown: it would have gone like the rest.

"'This morning, I met our black dog running after a hen. I might have known, from that, that I should have bad luck to-day.'

"'I tried to correct him and make him ashamed of this superstition, but he obstinately persisted in it and said with vivacity to me:

"'It seems to me two years since I went to Malepire for the first time; I would have done better to go back home again. Do you believe, as I came out of the house, I saw a raven pass not higher than the roof of our chicken-house? If my mother had known it she would not have let me go, poor woman! It is not that I repent of what has happened, but I might have done better. You are a sensible and a worthy man, M. Curé, and so I will open my heart to you. To tell the truth, a peasant who marries a lady takes to his home the "seven capital sins" in person.

"'How can you speak so?' cried I indignantly.

"'I said seven: it is too many; take off two or three,' he replied phlegmatically.

"'Silence, miserable man!' said I then: 'it was you who seduced the young girl; it was you who caused her misfortunes.'

"'Not at all; by no means,' interrupted he. 'As true as I shall die one day, I neither sought nor asked her. The first time I went to Malepire for the feast of St. Lazare, two years ago, she took part in the games. After the wrestling

there was a ball, and I danced with her. It was a great honor for me; but in truth I should better have liked to be with some young men, friends of mine, who were eating together a hare-ragout. She spoke pleasantly to me. I replied as well as I knew how, as it was my duty to do; and, when she left me, she said to me with a certain air some things which I did not expect to hear. I stayed at Malepire because she wished it. It would take too long to tell you how she made appointments with me. Why, there was no harm in it: she was in the parterre, upon the terrace of the castle; and I was below at the foot of a tree on the road to the village. We looked at each other in this manner from a distance, and spoke by signs. Sometimes I went at night under her window, and she threw me little ends of ribbon; you see this was child's play. Who would have thought that it would end in a marriage before the church? It was what she wanted, and she got her wish, that bad head! No matter; patience; perhaps some day her parents will pardon her.'

"We now approached St. C——; and, when we were in sight of the house, the abbat slackened his pace, and commenced to repent having come.

"'It is too much for me,' said he; 'I dare not go near my mother, and tell her what I have done; I had rather die.'

"'Well, I will first go in alone,' I replied, retaining him. 'I will prepare your family for the news of this deplorable event.'

"'Yes, M. le Curé,' said he to me with sudden decision: "you will tell the thing to my mother before every one. You see I only fear the first moment; after that, I will come in; pray my mother to excuse me, tell her that she must pardon me.'

"'And your wife, your unfortunate wife?' I interrupted, in a tone of reproach.

"'Oh! I know she will pardon me!' exclaimed he confidently.

"We went together as far as the door; the abbat remained outside, and I entered, recommending him not to go far away. All the family

were together for supper, and had taken their places around the table ; apparently my face explained my trouble of mind, for the mother Pinatel cried out, on seeing me :

"'Great Heavens ! what has happened ? what have you come to tell me, M. le Curé ?'

"I begged her to calm herself, and to submit to all the decrees of divine Providence ; 'for I have indeed bad news for you.'

"'It is of François that you speak ; all the others are here,' said she, trembling in every limb. 'My child, my poor child !'

"The young wife had approached me in silence ; anxiety was painted on her countenance ; but she did not weep.

"'My son,—tell me what has become of my son,' cried the mother Pinatel despairingly.

"'You shall see him very soon,' I replied ; 'He is living and well, but a great misfortune has happened him.'

"Whereupon, I told her what had happened ; and I explained to her vividly her son's repentance, adding that it was the grief and shame

with which his heart was filled, that kept him from appearing in her presence. She listened without a word; and then she said, raising her eyes to heaven:

"'God be praised! I thought a greater misfortune had happened him, that my poor child was dead; let him come, I will not reproach him; the money which he has lost was his own; it is a pity that he made bad use of it, but no one has a right to find fault with him about it.'

"The abbat had glided into the stable; on hearing his mother speak thus, he came in, and threw himself on her neck, transported with gratitude.

"'Come, my poor, dear child, do not fret,' said she to him, with a little ostentation of maternal love and of generosity. 'There will always be bread enough and to spare for you in the house.

"His brothers shook hands with him, and hastened to arrange a place for him at the table; his wife alone remained apart, and said nothing

to him. She was seated in one corner of the room, with her head bent down, and her hands extended on her knees. He approached her, and commenced speaking in a low voice, as if to appease her; but she listened gloomily, without raising her head, or answering him a single word. He redoubled his entreaties, and made a gesture as if to force her gently to look at him. Then she burst forth:

"'Leave me,' she cried in a loud voice, rising in a fury; 'you are a wretch unworthy of what I have done for you. Think you that I will eat the bread which your family give you as alms? No, no. Since you have not wished to go from here with me, I will go alone. I will leave you on the hearth where you were born, cowardly drone!'

"She did not continue. The abbat raised his hand, and she fell back with a hollow moan. Then every one threw themselves between them; the mother Pinatel ran to her son, and held his arms down against his body. I ran to the young wife, who stood straight back against the wall, staring

fixedly before her; one of her cheeks was livid, and the other of a purple red.

"'He struck me,' she said, with a frightful expression.

"Then, without listening to me, and without adding anything, or looking at any one, she left the room, and we heard her going up stairs, uttering imprecations.

"'Henceforth, hold your tongue,' cried the abbat after her.

"'Let her alone now,' said the mother Pinatel, forcing him to sit down. 'Don't make yourself in the wrong. She insulted you, and you have punished her; let it end there. You must make up, and try to live happily together.'

"'We shall see about that,' murmured he. 'Do you know, that, if you had spoken to me so, I should perhaps have been wanting in respect to you who are my mother.'

"It was now quite late, and I had to return to S—— the same evening. The eldest son wished to accompany me, saying that he had business to attend to at the fair on the morrow. Just as

we were setting out, the mother Pinatel had, as it were, a presentiment. She turned towards the abbat, and said uneasily :

"'You also had better go and sleep at S——, your wife is so angry with you. If you speak to her now, perhaps she will follow it up with something worse than has already happened.'

"'Do you think I am afraid of her?' replied he almost savagely at the thought ; 'let me alone for that, mother ; she will not insult me a second time.'

"We went on our way ; the weather was calm, and the full moon lighted our path. Before we had proceeded far, I turned my eyes once again to the house, and offered a prayer to God for the rebellious soul which I had left there. Alas! some strange foreboding filled my heart.

CHAPTER VII.

At these words, the Abbé Lambert sighed profoundly; and, for the second time, he appeared to hesitate to continue this strange history.

"Continue, I beseech you," said the Marquis to him, in a husky voice.'

"Well, I will," replied he: "The next morning, as I was going to church, I saw in the distance on the high road, a person who was walking very rapidly from St. C——. This man recognized me, and cried out as he passed: 'There has been a murder at the Pinatels: last night, the beautiful peasant killed her husband. I am going to Aix, to tell the justice.'

"On hearing these words, M. de Champaubert covered his face with both hands, and shuddered. I trembled to the depths of my heart, and turned away my eyes as if the culprit herself was before me.

"She certainly was a very wicked woman," cried my uncle.

"I decided immediately," continued the old priest, "instead of going to church, to take the road to St. C——. Before arriving there, I met a man who confirmed the frightful news which the messenger had given me. 'It was the beautiful peasant who did the deed; there is no doubt of it,' said he to me. 'Yesterday evening she quarrelled with her husband; however, they went to bed as usual, and all that night nothing was heard; this morning, at daybreak, the eldest son's wife got up to make the bread; as she passed before their room, her foot slipped, and, looking down, she saw that it was because there was blood running from under the door; then she cried out, and called for help. The two younger Pinatels were already out of bed to go to the vineyard; they came up stairs immediately, and found their brother assassinated in his bed. From all appearances, he had been surprised in the midst of his first sleep, for he had not moved; however, when I left he was still breathing, but they expected every moment would be his last.'

"'And the woman?' I asked trembling.

"'They searched for her, but she was not to be found. She must have taken flight across the fields, for they found the house door open; but she cannot escape; all the people in the village are in pursuit of her, to avenge the abbat.

"I hastened my steps, tearfully, asking, praying God that I might be in time to prepare this unfortunate man to appear before him. As I approached the house, I heard pitiful cries and sobs, and I thought all was over. The lower room was full of people who had come from the village. They told me that the abbat had not returned to conciousness, but that he still lived. I hastily mounted the rickety staircase, and entered a small apartment where the light of day penetrated through a dormer window only. All the family were there, assembled around the abbat, who was extended in the attitude of a sleeping man. A white cloth had been thrown entirely over the bed, and only permitted his face to be seen as it lay on the pillow. His mother leaned over him, and gazed at him with

inexpressible transports of grief, and from time to time spoke to him as if she hoped that he might hear her. On perceiving me, she cried out:

"'Yesterday you saw him alive and well, and now he is dying. She cut his throat like a poor lamb, the she-wolf!'

"'I come to succor him,' said I, with my heart full of faith.

"I went and knelt down at the other side of the bed; it seemed to me that the abbat moved a little, and partly opened his eyes. The physician arrived at that moment; he raised the cloth a little; and, after having assured himself that the pulse still beat, he leaned down to listen to the almost insensible respiration of the dying man; then he came towards me shaking his head.

"'Is there, then, no hope?' I asked in a low voice.

"'None,' he replied. 'The unfortunate man has but a few minutes to live. Without the prodigious strength of his organization, all would

have been over ere now; but life is slow to leave so young and vigorous a body.'

"I approached the abbat nearer to seek his hand, when I perceived with horror that it was bathed in his blood.

"'My son, my dear son,' said I to him, 'if you wish God to pardon you, pray to him from your heart with me; pray for your wife, and pardon her your death. You have but an instant; but one instant can perhaps buy back all the faults of your life. Do you hear me, my dear son? Do you ask for pardon?'

"He answered me nothing, but I had the unspeakable consolation of feeling his hand press feebly in mine. Then his eyelids partly opened; he looked at his mother; and, a moment after, the immortal soul had left his body.

"The evening of the same day, as I was returning to S——, I learned that the culprit had been arrested, and put in the prison of Aix. It was not in my power to administer to her the spiritual help which she now so greatly needed, because the civil authorities did not permit

sworn priests to enter the cells. On the impossibility of conversing with her, I wrote her all that Christian charity suggested to me for her consolation and her welfare; and I had the happiness to know that she received my letter.

"During this epoch of civil discord and troubles, human justice struck noiselessly great criminals. Thus it was that this wretched woman escaped a frightful notoriety. After having languished in prison more than a year, she was brought up before the tribunals which had succeeded the Parliamentary Courts, and was obscurely judged and condemned according to the new laws to be branded at the hands of the executioner, and then to be thrown into a house of seclusion for the remainder of her life. I was then no longer in Paris: the persecution had forced me to take refuge in the States of the Church, and I did not hear of her arrest and condemnation until long after it had occurred.

"On my return from the emigration, this affair was almost forgotten. They only said that the beautiful peasant, as they still called her, was

serving her time at Embrun, and that the mother Pinatel had died of grief because her daughter-in-law had not been sent to the scaffold.

"And since that time have you heard no news of the unfortunate woman?" cried the Marquis.

The Abbé Lambert hesitated a moment, as if some scruple had caused him to pause in the midst of his revelations. At last he replied briefly:

"Later I knew that she had gained her pardon, and had come out of prison. Her situation was still frightful, however. Misery and universal reprobation was what she was to find in the world. Some one, who knew how she had expiated her crime, aided her in concealing what she had been, and procured for her the humble means of gaining an honest living."

"I conjure you, Monsieur le Curé, again to inform yourself of her whereabouts," said M. de Champaubert, in a voice filled with emotion. "Then let me know of her situation. My intention is, that henceforth she shall have a sure income, that her last days may be tranquil."

The Abbé Lambert bowed, and simply replied:

"I will try, Monsieur le Marquis."

"Is it possible that for so long a time I have had before my eyes, without being aware of it, the heroine of so dark a history?" murmured Dom Gérusac, raising his eyes to the portrait. "My dear Abbé, you would have done well to have informed me of it."

The latter raised his eyes in astonishment.

"That is M'lle de Malepire," cried I: "did you not recognize it?"

He shook his head, and replied sadly:

"No, indeed: when I first saw her, she no longer had that fresh and laughing expression of countenance. She did not resemble that portrait."

There was a deep silence; the logs crackled on the hearth, and threw a bright flame, which replaced the light of the candle, now nearly consumed. Outside, the rain had ceased, and the wind moaned mournfully through the casement. The Marquis rose when the clock struck the hour

of midnight. He was to go away early the next morning, and it was arranged that we were to accompany him as far as the high road; before retiring he pressed the hand of Abbé Lambert, and, putting his purse on the chimney corner, said in a low voice:

"That is for your poor, Monsieur le Curé; every year I will renew my offering."

I did not close my eyes that night, nor did the Marquis sleep any; long after midnight I heard him pacing up and down his room. We were both thinking of that beautiful and lost creature, who had been his first love, and who thirty-five years after had taken captive my simple heart. I was still desperately in love with her: her fatal destiny had given her a sombre prestige which exalted my imagination. Her very crime filled me with a strange sentiment of admiration and horror. I thought that the abbat deserved death a thousand times, for having raised his hand to her, and that she had avenged it with a resolution worthy of her race. The *souvenir* of this vile rival excited in me a tempest

of jealousy. Spite of his deplorable end, it was too much honor, in my estimation; and willingly would I have paid, for his happiness, the same price as he did. These thoughts added fuel to the fever of my blood. I counted the hours, impatient for the return of day. Ceaselessly the same phantom continued to pass before my closed eyes, now smiling, now mournful and in tears; nevertheless, I was sleeping profoundly when Dom Gérusac called me the next morning.

The Marquis was all ready, and we set out. The rays of a soft autumn sun bathed the whole valley, its fresh vegetation no early frost had yet tinged with yellow. The robin redbreasts twittered in the long hawthorn hedges, and brilliant butterflies hovered around the flowering rosemary; but below this zone, where whisper the warm currents which come from the shores of the Mediterranean, rose crests of mountains already covered with a mantle of snow.

Before arriving at the high road, the Marquis turned round once again to contemplate this

landscape. His glance rested on the two peaks, separated by a deep cavity, which overlooked the southerly slope; and he murmured, with a sigh: "That is the Pass of Malepire."

A moment after, we reached the high road, where the carriages were waiting. M. de Champaubert offered me his hand, and strongly assured me of his friendship; then he turned to Dom Gérusac, and said tenderly to him:

"Now that we have again found each other, it costs me a great effort to leave you, my old friend."

"Yet we have been very sad," murmured my good uncle, with a sigh: "it was that confounded pastel that caused it."

The two friends embraced; the ambassador mounted quickly into his berlin, and leaned forward as he waved us another adieu. A moment later and we were alone on the border of the road, following with our eyes the great white cloud of dust which was disappearing from our sight. Dom Gérusac's first care on reaching the house was to call Babelou, and cause her to trans-

port to the garret the object of my idolatry; then he said coolly to me:

"The sight of that abominable woman would have troubled my meals. When dining I should be constantly reminded of her adventures; besides, this portrait is a veritable daub. I am sorry for Champaubert; but the arm is very incorrectly drawn, and in the foreshortening of the little finger he has made a complete failure. Anyhow, it is a pitiful picture, and I shall no longer allow it to disfigure my mantel."

I did not protest against this execution; nor did I ask my uncle to give me the painting to which I attached so great a price, and which he valued so lightly. I was afraid of betraying my secret folly in manifesting my desire to possess it; but I resolved to take possession of it slyly, and carry it away with me. There was no time to lose in effecting this abduction. The vacation was drawing to a close, and I should be obliged to set out in three days. The thing did not appear to me as very difficult to accomplish. It was merely necessary for me to go up three pairs

of stairs to the garret, to take the portrait from its frame, and confide it to the care of some little peasant, who, for a trifle, would carry it for me as far as the place where I must go to take the diligence. Before looking up a confidant and an accomplice who would aid me in this enterprise, I said insidiously to Babelou:

"How did you manage, my poor little girl, to carry that great old portrait clear up to the garret?"

"I put it behind the door, with its face turned to the wall. I tell you what, I had hard work to find a place for it, there is such a lot of old rubbish up there."

"Does my uncle keep all these old things under lock and key?" I asked, with an air of indifference.

"He thinks he does," said she, shrugging her shoulders; "but as we have to go there every day, for one thing or another, the key is left hanging on a nail beside the door."

I went away satisfied with this information, and passed nearly the whole day outside, under

pretext of hunting, but in reality to find a boy in the neighborhood who would carry out my design. I finally succeeded in finding a young lad; and after having assured myself of his discretion, by means of a five-franc piece, I appointed a rendezvous for the same evening, between the hour of eleven and midnight, at the foot of the garden path. He was to come furnished with two osier hurdles, between which I thought to transport the dear image, which, henceforth, should never leave me. These arrangements completed, I entered the house to wait impatiently until the appointed hour.

"It was already late; daylight was rapidly deepening into twilight, and a melancholy silence reigned around me. On entering the house, no one was to be seen. The lamp was already burning in the little sitting-room, where the dogs were asleep on the sofas. I thought that my uncle was at work in his library with his head buried in folios, and that Babelou was busy in the kitchen. The occasion appeared to me altogether favorable; I went up the stairs with a

palpitating heart, and my head on fire, burning like a ravisher ready to seize his prey. I have already said that the garret was in the third story. As I reached the top of the staircase, I found myself face to face with Dom Gérusac, who, with his study-lamp in his hand, and his spectacles put back on his forehead, came out of a room fronting the staircase. He looked dismayed and afflicted.

"Poor Marian is very ill," said he to me; "the Abbé Lambert has just administered to her the last sacrament; she may die at any moment."

"What a misfortune!" cried I, with real despair. Marian's room was next to the garret; the two doors adjoined each other; and I had no chance of executing my project without being perceived by those who surrounded the dying woman. My good uncle, seeing me so completely overcome, passed my arm through his, and forced me to go back again down stairs. We found Babelou weeping at the foot of the stairs.

"The poor woman worked too hard," said she

to us: "she ought to have been in her bed yesterday, but she had rather have died at the fire than leave before the dinner was cooked and ready to send in. Still she knew her danger. While I was waiting on the table, she said to the turnspit, who stood beside her, 'Go quickly, and get M. le Curé;' and that was what brought him here at nine o'clock last night, in the pouring rain; this morning she was better, however. To please her I took her the money which M. le Marquis gave me, two beautiful pieces worth forty francs, and I gave her one of them. She told me that she hardly felt sick at all; but that did not last, and now she is going to die."

We entered the sitting-room: a half-hour later the Abbé Lambert came to tell us that all was over.

The almost sudden death of Marian was one of those domestic events which, for a time, disorganizes a bachelor's household arrangements. My poor uncle was in great consternation, and kept continually saying:

"She was a very worthy girl; during the

whole ten or twelve years that she has been in my service, she has not once given me cause to find fault with her. I shall not easily replace her."

As to myself, I calculated the time when they should take away the corpse, and the time which I had before me to carry off M'lle de Malepire.

"Who is this poor girl's heir?" said my uncle suddenly. "I hold her wages for a year; she was very economical; all that belongs to her parents, if she has any living; we must inquire."

The Abbé Lambert shook his head; he was seated before the table, and occupied in registering the certificate of death. When he had finished, he put the paper under Dom Gérusac's eyes without saying anything, who threw himself back as though stunned, as he looked at the mantelpiece. I mechanically drew near, and read over his shoulder:

"To-day, 12th October, 18—, is deceased, at St. Pierre de Corbie, Madeleine Marie de Malepire, widow of François Pinatel, etc."

"Oh! Marian! 'twas she!" cried I, with horror. The Abbé Lambert and my uncle leaned against the table, with their hands joined; I thought they prayed; Babelou was sobbing behind the door. I remained seated in the chimney corner, with my head bowed in my hands; and I remained there all the evening, confounded, humiliated. Towards midnight, I went to my room; an instant after I heard, under the window, some one calling me in a low voice; I partly opened the casement; it was my confidant, who, impatient of waiting so long and fruitlessly at the end of the walk, had come to remind me that he was there.

"Well, Mr. Frederic," said he, raising himself on the tips of his toes, "I have come to get it, the picture; couldn't you let it down, out of the window?"

"Get out of my sight," replied I, with an imprecation. "I haven't it, and I don't want it."

Fifteen years later, after the death of Dom Gérusac, who had instituted me his sole heir, I

went back, and found M'lle de Malepire still in the same place, behind the garret door. The mice had nibbled the canvas somewhat; and the little finger, which had so shocked my good uncle, had disappeared. I had the pretty pastel renewed, and to-day it figures honorably in my collection of portraits.

THE END.

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